

S H E R L O C K ' S  
L E T T E R S.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

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# LETTERS 21

ON

## SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE

Rev. MARTIN SHERLOCK, A.M.

Chaplain to the Right Honourable

THE EARL OF BRISTOL.

---

O that my Enemy would publish a Book!

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MDCCLXXXI.

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TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE  
THE COUNTESS  
OF BRI  
B R I S T O L.

M A D A M,

**E**Xcuse me if I do not praise  
the brightnes of your eyes,  
the richness of your shape, or  
the uncommon noblenes of your  
soul. I am ill at compliment,  
and do not chuse to be every  
body's echo.

A 3 You

You know me, Madam, to be  
a modest man; but though mo-  
dest, I am ambitious: I aspire to  
please readers of taste and ta-  
lents. If I have *your* suffrage,  
I shall have theirs.

I am,  
with the most perfect veneration  
and respect,  
Madam,  
Your Ladyship's  
most obedient,  
humble servant,

MARTIN SHERLOCK.

## P R E F A C E.

I AM persuaded my mother was in a good humour when I was made; for it is very hard to put me out of temper. If any thing could do it, it would be the severity with which I have been treated by the critics. Mercy on me! how they have maul'd me! Their indignation, however, has not fallen so much on my works as on my person. They allow my writings merit, but then I am the *vainest creature*. — Dear

viii      P R E F A C E.

Reader, I hope you don't believe them. Sure you don't think there ever was such a character as a vain author.

O that my enemy would publish a book, said Solomon ! and I always suspected that this royal writer had uttered this exclamation while he was smarting under the criticisms of some unmerciful Reviewer. These Reviewers have ever been a dangerous set of men. What I dislike most in them is their savage mode of attack. They shoot at you from behind a tree : you never see them. However, I believe their policy is good. Obscurity gives weight to their oracles. If they were known, their

their names alone would kill their criticsins.

I do not mean this as a declaration of war against them *all*. I am not strong enough to fight the whole world, as England does. There are among them men of parts and candour, who have treated me with indulgence, who have spared my person, who have done more than justice to any feeble talent I may possess, and who have enlightened me by their remarks. To the other gentlemen I must beg leave to say, they are guilty of an error in attacking an author's person. It is not their province. Their duty is to inform the public of the merits or demerits

x      P R E F A C E.

demerits of his works. It is of importance to the public to know whether a writer speaks truth or falsehood, whether he writes sense or nonsense. It is of no importance to it to know whether he is a proud or a vain man.

To prove that I am *not* a vain man, I make two appeals; one to those who know me; and they, I am sure, will bear witness in my favour. The other appeal shall be to my reader. I am forced to begin with my own praise; but as it is strict truth, and necessary for my defence, the reader must pardon me. I have written in Italian, in English and in French. The Reviewers of France,

France, of Italy, and England, have criticised my writings. They have all agreed in one point, in allowing me *good taste*. I stake my reputation upon this assertion, that there is not among them *all a single exception*. It is for my last book *alone* I am censured as vain. In this last book, which I published at Paris, I have written a letter upon (1) Taste. In a note on that letter, there is a defence of the taste of this country, in which are these words: "But if these letters prove that I have no taste, I intreat the reader not to judge a nation by

(1). Letter XXIV.

" an

“ an individual, and to be persuaded  
“ that there are ten thousand men  
“ in England who have more taste  
“ than I.” Reader, is that the lan-  
guage of vanity ?

LET-

## LETTERS

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS,

## LETTER I.

THE King of Prussia asked me, What was the reason there was so little Genius at this instant in Europe? I had often looked for an answer to this question before, but never could find one. I thought, however, it would be making a sorry figure not to say something; so I said,

I said, “ Nature had exhausted herself “ in producing his Majesty.” This was *nonsense*, and *old nonsense* too; but the compliment at the end of it gave it an air of novelty. The King’s eye widened. He said nothing.

It is inconceivable how absurdly men of sense sometimes talk, and how often they deceive themselves and others by a jargon of words, without ever examining the idea they contain. For God’s sake, what do men mean by saying that Nature exhausted herself in the age of Pericles, and that she reposited to the days of Augustus? Weakened then, by the productions of some few Geniusess, she had again need to rest to the reign of Leo: and totally worn out, it seems,

under Lewis the Fourteenth, she now wants a repose of three or four centuries, to enable her to produce something noble and splendid.

How many writers have printed this idea ! What they mean by " Nature's being exhausted" I could never penetrate.

Some ages ago a man and a woman made Homer. This Homer, in every respect like another man, had the good fortune to unite a nice ear, fine feelings, and a solid judgement, to an extensive and vigorous imagination. These he had given him at his birth ; and these he improved considerably by practice. His other acquirements were the consequence of conversation, trayel, and an attentive observation of nature.

Ariosto

Ariosto was born many centuries after. He came also into the world as you and I did ; but gifted, like Homer, with a fine ear and a brilliant imagination. By labour and study he became master of the poetical language of his country ; and, notwithstanding his many and great defects, he is justly to be reckoned among the first Geniusess that Nature has produced.

What connection there is between Homer's and Ariosto's coming into the world, is a mystery of which I have not yet been able to find the key.

An honest wool-merchant at Stratford got England's glory. How far *he* might have been exhausted in so doing I cannot tell ; but how that is to hinder another

ther wool-merchant at Stratford from getting another Shakspere this night, is beyond my comprehension.

I wish I knew how men of genius are made, and I should gladly communicate the receipt to the world. Every one who has passed through (1) Aosta knows the way that fools are made. It is a custom, in the vintage months, for the husband and wife to go to their cellars after dinner to drink the new wine, and when they are both half-intoxicated they make ideots. This place is full of naturals; and they are almost all born nine months after the vintage season.

What a digression!—from the brightest Genius of Europe to its intellectual

(1) In Piedmont.

abortions. But you know that Letter-writing is naturally rambling, and that apology is sufficient.

His Majesty talked a great deal about Shakspeare. He speaks eloquently, and attacked our poet with vigour. He began, indeed, with gentleness and goodness in his manner—“ You admire “ Shakspeare ? (1)” —“ I do, Sire, as the “ greatest Genius that ever existed.” —“ Permit me to observe,” he had the condescension to say, “ that when a man “ undertakes to labour in any art, of “ which the rules are fixed and deter-“ minate, he ought to confine himself “ to those rules. Aristotle—” and then he spoke for some minutes with great

(1) He had seen it in my Book.

strength

strength and learning. I soon saw that Voltaire had corrupted him ; and though I said all I could, consistent with the respect I owed a Royal Opponent, it was to no purpose. I was always obliged to agree that he was right, while I endeavoured to prove that he was wrong. I appealed from Aristotle's rules to the tribunal of Nature and Reason. I insisted humbly upon the *incontestible* prerogative of Genius to create, and that consequently Shakspeare had the same right to invent a species of poetry that Thespis had. The attack was *à la Prussienne* ; the defence was *à l'Angloise*—I confess I liked the def— but I am afraid I was partial.

He asked me after, Whether there was any successor in England to Shakspere, Newton, and Hume? I said, None. He asked, *Why* was there so great a dearth of literary genius in a country which had produced so many great men? I thought this question less difficult to be answered than his first. “ The great roads to emoluments and honours in that country, Sire, are the Bar and the Houses of Parliament; and therefore every man aims to render himself famous by his tongue rather than his pen.”—His Majesty seemed satisfied with this reason.

## LETTER II.

**H**AVE Women genius? I think they have; and I could mention the names of several living, both in France and England, to support my opinion. But let us endeavour to have a clear idea of what genius is, and every one then may decide the question for himself.

Genius is but another word for Invention. Create any thing new, that creation is a work of genius. The only faculty necessary to create is imagination. To produce an elegant, great, or useful creation, this imagination must

be directed by judgement. Genius then is the union of a sound judgement and a superior imagination. Originality is it's infallible criterion.

I know of no man that ever existed, the whole of whose genius is not comprehended in this description. Archimedes, Newton, Shakfpeare, and Richardson, were only superior to other mortals by stronger judgements and superior imaginations.

The greatest effort of genius that perhaps was ever made, was forming the plan of Clarissa Harlowe. The second was executing that plan. Here then was genius, upon its most elevated and most extensive scale. The planning and execu-

execution of (1) Nourjahad were equally efforts of genius. They differ only in degree.

The plan of the Iliad was formed in Homer's imagination, as that of Alexander's Ode was formed in Dryden's. The conception and execution of those two works were equally efforts of genius, and only differed in degree, like Clarissa and Nourjahad.

The species of genius are as infinite as its gradations. The General or Admiral who creates a new manœuvre, proves that he has genius. If he forms a grand plan for a campaign, he shews

(1) Written by Mrs. Sheridan, author of Sidney Biddulph, The Discovery, &c. one of the first female Geniusæ that ever wrote.

himself to be a Genius of a superior order: I believe no one doubts that Turenne's pretensions to this title are as justly founded as those of Homer.

No men have such frequent and such great occasions to display genius as Ministers have. The man who gave the best proof of the superiority of his invention since this war began, was he who conceived the idea of the *Armed*

(1) *Neutrality.*

Genius is often seen in works of very little compass:

*Vidit & erubuit lympha pudica Deum,*  
was a line of genius which announced Dryden; and Busby felt it.

(1) This, by the way, is an idea that I hazard.

*Nocte pluit tota; redeunt spectacula manus;*  
*Divisum imperium cum Jove Cæsar habet;*  
 was a distich of genius which announced  
 Virgil; and Augustus felt it.

My notion is, that every person who has strength of imagination sufficient to produce any thing new, be that production ever so small, is a person of genius; and that consequently the inventor of the Bayonet and the author of the Sentimental Journey were men of genius, as well as Shakspere and the man who invented the art of Printing.

I have quoted a line and a distich as proofs of genius. I will go farther, and assert that it appears often in a single word:

*Imparadis'd*

*Imparadis'd* in one another's arms; \*\*  
says Milton :

When, like an eagle in a dove-coat, I

*Flutter'd* your Volscians in Corioli;

says Coriolanus.

*Imparadis'd* and *Flutter'd* are words of  
genius, and none but men of superior  
imaginings could have produced them.

It would be easy to write a volume  
on this subject; but I have already said  
enough to prove what I advanced in the  
beginning of my Letter, that Women have  
genius; for I have said that Sterne had  
some, and every man knows Women who  
had more genius than Sterne had.

## L E T T E R III.

MANY people consider sensibility as a part of genius. They mistake. Sensibility is a distinct faculty; very distinct indeed; for it belongs to the soul, with which genius has no necessary connection. Is there any soul in the works of Newton or Archimedes? in the architecture of Michael Angelo, or in that of Palladio? Yet these men's title to genius is not to be disputed.

What has led people into this error, is their finding sensibility in a very eminent degree in some men of superior imaginations.

nations. Too happy they who unite them ! Human Nature is then arrived at her highest summit of perfection; she *can* go no farther.

I request you will remember I am not laying down systems. I give you my ideas upon certain points, as you desired; and I am now going only to mention my own particular taste, of which you will adopt or reject as much as you think proper.

I prefer a man of genius who has sensibility to a man of imagination who has not. One should imagine that all the world would be of my way of thinking. The fact, however, is not so; I have known many men prefer-

Horace.

Horace <sup>an (1)</sup> is ~~a~~ poet to Virgil; and almost all the Italians prefer Ariosto to Tasso. Horace had certainly a fine fancy, and Ariosto's imagination was, no doubt, superior to Tasso's; but Tasso has many passages that elevate and soften the soul, Ariosto scarce any. And as to Virgil, I confess I feel ten times the pleasure in reading his fourth book, and part of his ninth, than I do in all the odes of Horace.

(1) His Satires and Epistles are out of the question: he is only a poet in his Odes. If morality was to be considered, Horace is to be preferred to Virgil; and the author of the Ramblers to both of them put together. But this is a separate point. We are talking of them here only as poets.

It is inconceivable what a number of men there are in the world who are totally devoid of sensibility. I remember to have heard a story in France of a young man, who just came from the country, and went with two Ladies to see the tragedy of Iphigenia. When the whole house was dissolved in tears at a very affecting scene, the Ladies observed that their cousin remained totally unaffected; and one of them asked him, why he did not cry as they did. "Why," says he, "for two reasons; first, I know "that what I see is not true; and next, "suppose it was, what is that to me?"

Real fine feelings are a much rarer gift than is generally imagined. With what cold indifference do many people

see

see their fellow-creatures in distress, and read Clarissa, without shedding a tear ! Clarissa, because they know it is not true ; and human beings in misery, because, though it *is* true, what is that to them ?

LET.

in a *quibbler* making *quibbles* in  
the **L E W T T E R** IV.

**Y**OU think Voltaire the first *Bib  
Esprit* that ever lived. So do I.  
You think he had genius. There I am  
sorry we differ. If he had, it was so  
little I could never discover it; and I  
looked for it often. But I can find ge-  
nius in almost every page of Shakspeare.  
Though I have little learning, I scarce  
ever discover a beauty in Voltaire, with-  
out being able to tell where the mother-  
idea of it is to be found.

The works of Voltaire which should  
best shew his genius, if he had any, are  
*Candide* and a Poem which I dare not  
name.

name. His imagination here was without restraint ; and what has it produced ? Ridiculous extravagancies and absurdities that disgust. These however are the two productions that do most honour to his talents, particularly the last. There are as happy passages in it for delicacy of wit and brilliancy of style as ever were read ; but the number of horrors with which it abounds makes it shocking to men of decency, and disgusting to all readers of taste.

As to the invention of this poem, every one knows that it belongs entirely to Chapelain and Ariosto ; as the groundwork of *Candide* is borrowed from Swift. So that his admirers may give to these performances every other merit they

please ; but as to genius, it is out of the question.

I am Voltaire's friend and enemy. He is a very voluminous and a very unequal author. There is a great deal of good, and a great deal of bad in him. His writings sometimes breathe a spirit of humanity, and a love of tolerance, which must endear him to every reader. His style is charming ; always rapid, easy, brilliant. Diction in writing is like colouring in a picture ; it is the first thing that strikes, and with most persons the only thing. Splendid language and bright colours will dazzle ninety-nine people in an hundred, captivate their eye and their fancy, and impose upon their understanding. This has been the

grand magic by which this seducing writer has fascinated almost all classes of readers. No man ever wrote with greater elegance, delicacy, or grace. So polished, so agreeable, so full of the tone of the best company, he must please every person who loves mankind, who admires wit, and who knows how to appreciate the charms of fine writing.

Turn the medal, and what an unhappy reverse! Audacious preacher of infidelity, malignant calumniator of the most virtuous characters, odious encourager of every species of vice, he sacrificed all human and divine ideas to his favourite passions; and prostituted talents, formed to adorn humanity, to a miserable love of money and of fame. A prostitute he

was, and of the most despicable class. Born to independance, and possessed of affluence early in life, he could not plead the solicitations of necessity; and the innumerable passages of invective, licentiousness, and impiety, which abound in his works, make him fall an unpitied victim of his own innate baseness and depravity.

Here let it not be imagined I declaim against a philosopher enlightened and humane. I declaim against him because he was *not* humane. Was that man the lover of his race who deprived the afflicted of their most healing balm, and the aged of their greatest consolation? Let the aged and afflicted answer the question.—Where lies the chief alleviation

tion of their sufferings ? Is it not in religion ? Was that man then the friend of mankind, who endeavoured to rob so large a portion of it of their strongest hope, and of their most pleasing enjoyments ? Was that man the friend of mankind, who brought the Chevalier de la Barre to be broke alive upon the wheel ; and who sowed unhappiness through the world as far as he propagated immorality ?

His tragedies, you'll say, are moral and instructive. And why are they ? Because to fill them with noble sentiments and found morality was the most likely method to insure their success. Individuals love their own private vices. Bodies of men ever love and countenance

virtue. A romance or poem is written for an individual in the dark. A tragedy is addressed to a collective body in the face of day. He knew all this, and, desirous only to please every palate, he served up virtue to the virtuous, and vice to the debauched, and gave to both the highest seasoning a luxuriant fancy could compose.

If you will permit me to follow this metaphor and return to his talents, I will say, Voltaire was a great literary cook. Give him good meats, no man knew better how to dress them. But they must be given him, for he was not rich enough to provide them himself.

Don't you think his works resemble Corinthian brass? He took the gold of Shakfpeare,

Shakspeare, Virgil, Corneille, Racine, Ariosto, and Pope, and the silver of La Fare, Chaulieu, Fontenelle, and Hamilton, and melted them together in the crucible of his brain. The metal produced was neither pure, nor gold, nor silver; it was brass; but it was Corinthian brass.

## LETTER V.

BUT Voltaire's quantity astonishes. It never astonished me. He made verses at twelve years old. By eighteen he had published works, and was introduced by Ninon d'Enclos to the most polished people of Paris. From eighteen to eighty-four he never ceased to labour; and is it astonishing that in sixty-two years he produced about six good volumes? Will any impartial man say that there are more than six volumes of his forty which are really worth mentioning?

Is there an advantage that an author can have that this man wanted ? Born independent ; situated at Paris ; protected by the great ; courted, I may say, by Sovereigns ; his works purchased with avidity by booksellers ; devoured with greater avidity by the public ; the advantages of learning, travel, and so long a life ; what an assemblage of happy circumstances ! Is it prodigious that one sixth part of his works is worthy of praise ?

I think Dryden was a man of better parts than Voltaire. But how different their situations in life ! The one never obliged to enter his cabinet, till to enter it gave him pleasure ; the other shivering at his table, with famine star-

ing

ing him in the face if he did not produce his four plays at the end of a year: one enjoying every luxury of life; the other in want of all its necessaries: Dryden living in a climate unfavourable to fancy, and certainly forced to live upon malt liquors, which almost kill the imagination: the meat and manner of dressing it, the milk, cheese, and butter, and every other article of life, decidedly conduced to thicken the blood, clog its motion, and consequently to deaden the fancy. Voltaire breathing a pure and vivifying air; no heavy liquors; no gross nourishment; every article of life the very reverse of what it is in England. The French poet living on the theatre of Europe (a most important circumstance);

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the English poet confined to the British dominions. If Voltaire, at a supper, produced four happy lines, in six weeks they had gone farther than Dryden's fame will possibly ever reach: his language universally understood; his merit of consequence universally *felt*. Every thing that tends to raise and quicken the spirits is of use to a man who works from fancy; and what raises the spirits higher than the idea of universal admiration? Every circumstance in France is favourable to talents: every circumstance is against them in England, except one. They are recompensed here in a manner unknown to any other nation. The Earl of Southampton gave Shakspeare more in one present than

Voltaire

Voltaire ever received from all the nobility of France. Dr. Robertson received, I dare say, six times as much for his History of Charles V. as he could have got for it in any other capital in Europe, supposing the book had been written in the language of the country. Rewards like these conquer climate and every other disadvantage. But poor Dryden lived in a worthless reign, and was too happy not to die literally by hunger, as his contemporary Otway did.

All the ideas in these two last letters may be false. Perhaps they may make true ones arise in you.

## LETTER VI.

“THE *Henriade* is a finer epic poem  
 “than the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, the  
 “*Jerusalem Delivered*, or than the *Pa-  
 “radise Lost*.”

Well said, Lord Chesterfield. I like  
 a man that has an opinion of his own;  
 and this opinion was positively his lord-  
 ship's, unless, as I have more than once  
 been tempted to suspect, he stole it  
 from Voltaire.

To support this singular judgment he  
 says, “It is all good sense from begin-  
 ning to end.” So it is; and so is the  
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To support this singular judgment he says, "It is all good sense from beginning to end." So it is; and so is the *History of Lewis the Fourteenth*; but that

that does not make it an epic poem. Lord Chesterfield might have said a great deal more in its favour without annihilating poor Homer, Virgil, Milton, and Tasso. But he seems to me to have loved Greek as little as a Frenchman does; and I am not sure that he had quite talents enough to praise well. Richardson remarks very justly, that poverty of genius is the reason that men can't praise one woman but by robbing the rest.

The noble writer might have courted this author much better, because more truly, by saying, The Henriade is a fine poem, written with elegance, correctness, and dignity. The diction is rich and splendid, the thoughts just, the sentiments no-

ble,

em-  
ble, and the versification as harmonious  
d a as French versification *can* be. He might  
out have told him; Your poem, notwithstanding  
ton, its points and antitheses, has less  
have defects than either the *Aeneid* or the  
man *Iliad*;—and (this he need not have  
had told him, but he should have thought  
Ri- it)—it's only material faults are want  
po- of *interest*, want of enthusiasm, and want  
men of original beauties.

Some of his (1) Portraits are brilliant  
and bold. The Death of (2) Coligny,  
the description of the (3) Massacre and  
of the (4) Temple of Love, deserve the  
warmest praise.

(1) Particularly that of the Duke of Guise,  
Chant III. (2) Chant II. (3) Ibid.  
(4) Chant IX.

These

These are the best passages in his poem; and they are truly excellent. However, I cannot think they are sufficient to eclipse the greatest works that England, Italy, and Greece can boast of. Indeed any Lord Chesterfield seems to have doubted himself of the truth of his assertion, for, forgetting his wonted good-breeding, he has recourse to some of Lord Peter's (1) arguments, and abuses grossly every one who presumes to differ from him in opinion.

(1) Tale of a Tub.

## LETTER VII.

I Do not know any writer whose irony is equal to Voltaire's for edge and polish; nor do I know any writer who possessed the Graces in a more eminent degree than he did. There is an elegance in his manner, and a delicacy in his turns, which cannot be surpassed. I shall give here two short specimens, in a Letter, and *a quatrain*.

You know that to have merit in any literary line, was sufficient to excite the envy and hatred of this extraordinary man. M. le President de Pompignan, author of *Dido*, and a poet of real

talents, had the misfortune to be singularly disagreeable to M. de Voltaire, who, according to his usual custom, without respect to truth or decency, wrote a number of violent and atrocious calumnies against him. The brother of this Gentleman, who, as well as I recollect, was in the army, sent a Letter to the Satirist, in which he told him that, if ever he wrote against any of his family again, he should *cut off* his ears. M. de Choiseul was then in the ministry, and Voltaire sent him the following Letter.:

“ Monsieur,

“ Tout le sang de Pompignan m'  
“ veut ; l'un m'écorche les oreilles de  
puis vingt ans ; l'autre me marque re-

" comment qu'il veut me les couper.  
 " Chargez vous de ce spadassin, Mon-  
 " sieur; & moi, je me chargerai de  
 " l'ecorcheur; car enfin je veux con-  
 " server mes oreilles, ne seroit ce que  
 " pour entendre tout le bien qu'on dit  
 " de votre ministere.

" Je suis, Monsieur, &c."

Isn't that a charming Letter? You see  
 he was almost frightened out of his  
 wits; for he was a very timorous man.  
 But with what address does he conceal  
 his terrors! and at the same time how  
 ingenious, lively, and graceful is his  
 address to the Minister to preserve his  
 ears!

M. de la Borde was going on a visit to Ferney; Madame du Barry begged of him to give Voltaire two kisses from her. He sent her, in return, these four lines:

*Quoi! deux baisers sur la fin de ma vie!*

*Quel passeport daignez vous m'envoyer?*

*Ah! c'en est trop, adorable Egerie,*

*Je serois mort de plaisir au premier.*

Only think of these verses, when he was almost eighty!

If I had a mind to quote blemishes and abominations, God knows there is a plentiful crop of them in his works. But, besides that I do not chuse to present any thing offensive to my reader's imagination, nor to pollute my own

pages; I have more pleasure in pointing out beauties than faults: *I love to praise with reason on my side.*

The unfortunate Princess of Brunswick, who was married to the Prince Royal of Prussia, was condemned, for conjugal infidelity, to perpetual confinement in the town of Stetin, where you know she now is. The King always liked this Princess. She sent to France for a handsome gown. All French goods pay very high duty in the Prussian dominions; and when the robe arrived, the officers of the customs refused to send it to the Princess till he had receiyed the duty. She sent him a very civil message, requesting he would bring the stuff, and that she would give him the money.

As soon as she had taken it from him, and locked it up, she flew upon him, and gave him two most violent boxes in the face. The man complained to the King ; said he was dishonoured, and demanded redress. His Majesty wrote the following determination :

“ La perte du droit d'accise sera sur  
 “ mon compte. La robe restera à la  
 “ Princesse. Les deux soufflets à celui  
 “ qui les a reçus. Quant au pretendu  
 “ déshonneur j'en réleve le plaignant:  
 “ jamais l'application d'une belle main  
 “ n'a pu déshonorer la face d'un doua-  
 “ nier.

“ FREDERIC.”

Though this decision is pretty generally known, I give it you here, that

you

you may compare Voltaire's *manner* with the King of Prussia's. They are both of the same school; but there is a shade between them, which I defy language to express, though it is very perceptible, and very easily felt.

## LETTER VIII.

**M**r. Addison was a very fine writer; easy, elegant, graceful, and polished. He has written (1) professedly on wit; and after having remarked that no author had *entered into the bottom of this matter*, he has, with great judgment, divided his subject into three parts. All that he says upon mixed and false wit appears to me to be perfect. I cannot say I think him equally happy in what he says on true wit.

He begins with observing, that Mr. Locke has an admirable reflection upon

(1) Spectator, N° 58, and the five following Papers.

the

the difference between wit and judgement, whereby he endeavours to shew the reason why they are not always the talents of the same person. His words are as follow:

“ And (1) hence, perhaps, may be given some reason of that common ob-

“ servation,

(1) Because Mr. Locke has said here, that men who have a great deal of wit have not always the clearest judgement; and because he has said a little after, that judgement, *on the contrary, lies quite on the other side*, many people have understood that he meant that wit and judgement were at variance, and that they were never, or at least very seldom, to be met together. If people speak about ordinary Wits, I give up the question; but if they mean Wits of the first rank, I contend for the direct contrary of this assertion; and I affirm, that though a man may have an infallible judgement without possessing

“ servation, that men who have a great  
 “ deal of wit and prompt memories, have  
 “ not always the clearest judgement, or  
 “ deepest reason. For wit lying most  
 “ in the assemblage of ideas, and putting

possessing a particle of wit, it is impossible for him to have wit without judgement; and that so far from judgement's being opposite to wit, it is it's constant companion, and absolutely inseparable from it. Who do you think, Reader, were the three greatest Wits of this country? I believe you will answer, Swift, Congreve, and Mr. Sheridan. Which of those three men wanted judgement?

When the fancy has discovered a relationship between two remote ideas, surely the judgement must determine whether the discovery be a just one. If there is not judgement to decide for the fancy, she operates at random, and for one just trait of wit that she produces, she will produce ten false ones.

“ those

those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy ; judgement, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude and by affinity to take one thing for another. This is a way of proceeding quite contrary to metaphor and allusion ; wherein, for the most part, lies that entertainment and pleasantry of wit which strikes so lively on the fancy, and is therefore so acceptable to all people."

Mr.

Mr. Addison adds to this, by way of explanation, “ that every resemblance of ideas is not that which we call wit, unless it be such an one that gives delight and surprize to the reader: these two properties seem essential to wit, more particularly the last of them.” I have the good fortune to think intirely with Mr. Addison, that those two properties are essential to wit; but, speaking with all the deference due to so great a man, I do not think it is more particularly *the last* of them: I think it is more particularly *the first*.

When I presume to differ from such an author as this, I write with diffidence; but Locke has justly advanced that “ no deference is to be paid to authority;”

"thority;" and I explain myself by an instance: when Othello says,

"I caught by the throat, the uncircumcised dog,"

"And smote him thus;

I am sure no man living ever foresaw the close. *And smote him thus* is a very high degree of surprize; but it gives no delight, and no one ever thought of calling it wit.

There is generally a peculiar justness and perspicuity in the illustrations of this great critic, which render them at once agreeable and instructive. I am not sure that I am not mistaken here; but what does the reader think? To support and illustrate his idea that *surprise*

prise more particularly is essential to wit,  
 he says, " Thus when a poet tells us the  
 " bosom of his mistress is as white as  
 " snow, there is no wit in the compa-  
 " rison (because there is no surprise):  
 " but when he adds, with a sigh, that it  
 " is as cold too, it then grows into wit;"  
 (because this last is unexpected.) I con-  
 fess, this idea appears to me to be totally  
 false. Who ever heard of a sighing Wit?  
 Is Romeo a Wit? No; but Mercutio is.  
 If a man's saying, " the bosom of his  
 " mistress is as white as snow, but alas!  
 " it is as cold too," be *wit*, there never  
 was a wittier poet than Petrarch. Yet I  
 do not remember to have ever heard that  
 Petrarch was a Wit. *Delight* is inse-  
 parable

vit, varable from wit, and gaiety is the constant companion of delight (1).

This is all that Mr. Addison has said of true wit, and this is the single example he has given of it: this, I ask his pardon, appears to me to be no example at all.

He afterwards quotes Dryden's definition of wit, which he very judiciously (2) condemns, as not being so properly

(1) Read over what Locke has said in the beginning of this letter, and you will find the words *pleasant, agreeable, entertainment, pleasantry, lively*. There is nothing like this in a lover's saying, his mistress's bosom is as cold as snow.

(2) He might have condemned Pope's along with it, and nearly for the same reason;

“ True wit is nature to advantage dress'd.”

Pope's definition in prose is no better than his definition in verse; “ It is a quick conception, and an easy delivery.”

a de-

a definition of wit as of good writing in general. "It is (says Dryden) a profi-  
ciency of words and thoughts adapted  
to the subject." Is it not extraor-  
dinary that so sagacious a writer as Ad-  
dison did not see that, in condemning  
Dryden, he was passing judgement upon  
himself? Listen to him in the very next  
paragraph.

"Bouhours, whom I look upon to be  
the most penetrating of all the French  
critics, has taken pains to shew, that  
it is impossible for any thought to be  
beautiful which is not just, and has not  
its foundation in the nature of things;  
that the basis of all wit is truth; and  
that no thought can be valuable or  
which good sense is not the ground-  
work.

work. Boileau has endeavoured to inculcate the same notion in several parts of his writings, both in prose and verse. This is that natural way of writing, that beautiful simplicity, which distinguishes the ancients, and which nobody deviates from but those who want strength of genius to make a thought shine in its own native beauties. Poets, who want strength of genius to give that majestic simplicity to "Nature," &c. Nobody, I believe, denies any part of this; but what has it to do particularly with wit? Are not truth and good sense the necessary groundwork of every species of excellent composition? And is not all this as true of

good writing in general, as it is of wit? But of all the ideas that were ever thought of, what has wit to do with a *majestic simplicity*? Wit and Majesty are almost (1) opposites. Simplicity, I allow, is the first grace of every work of every species. But there are different sorts of simplicity; and that which belongs peculiarly to wit is a (2) *brilliant simplicity*, and not a *majestic* one.

(1) They met once in the King of Prussia.

(2) Brillancy ever had, and ever ought have, a powerful effect upon mankind. No one can be insensible to the lustre of the diamond. All that can be guarded against is receiving a brilliant for true. As a false stone highly polished will deceive an ignorant eye; so a false thought, splendid language will dazzle and impose on uncultivated imagination. "A pin" (says

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son) " was the Cleopatra for which Shakespeare lost the world." Antony lost the world Cleopatra, and lost it to Augustus ; but to whom did Shakespeare lose it? If the Augustus not be named, Dr. Johnson's brilliant phrase is wit.

## LETTER IX.

WIT is compounded of imagination and judgement. So I said, genius was. Yet wit and genius are not two similar faculties which differ only in degree; they are very distinct. A sound judgement is equally necessary to both; but the imagination in a man of genius differs not only in magnitude from the same faculty in a man of wit, but seems to me to be almost of a different species. In many respects they resemble each other, but the essential difference which I think separates them is *heat*. Allow me a familiar image, and I'll make





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y meaning clear. Wit resembles a  
ely French lap-dog ; genius a high-  
ed English foxhound : genius refem-  
es a conflagration ; wit an artificial  
ework : or if you chuse a higher and  
haps a juster allusion ; genius may be  
pared to a torrent of lava, and wit to  
vely limpid rivulet.

The object of wit is to please ; the  
ect of genius is to invent. There  
er was a man of genius who was not  
deep thinker : people may have wit  
o never think deeply ; witness a hun-  
d women who are full of wit, and  
o are incapable of deep thinking.  
t is pretty ; genius is sublime : that  
rms ; this transports : wit sparkles ;  
ius blazes : that gives pleasure ; this

gives rapture. We love wit; we reverence genius. The lips of wit are dressed in smiles, as were the lips of Sterne and Voltaire; the brow of genius is ploughed with wrinkles, as you see in the busts of Newton and Archimedes. Wit's laurel flourishes while they are protected by novelty; the bays of genius acquire freshness by the lapse of years. Am I partial, or am I true? Perhaps I deceive myself, but I mean to be just; Shakespeare's reputation increases daily, while Voltaire's fame is hourly decaying.

I have said that heat appears to me to be the quality that discriminates genius from wit. A man may be witty in a very eminent degree, and not have a ray of that vigorous and vivifying warmth

which

which is necessary to impregn the fancy. Few men had more wit than Pope ; yet wanting, like Voltaire, that male energy and burning glow, which alone distinguish the true-born genius, he never can be ranked but in a secondary class. Compare him with Dryden. And since he thought proper to enter the lists with that poet, in writing an ode on St. Cecilia's day, let those two odes determine between them. One is the cool, tame, pretty rivulet ; the other the Vesuvian torrent I spoke of.

The evident criterion of warmth in a writer is his heating his reader. And were I to decide from my own feelings I should say, that Shakspeare and Homer were the first poetic geniuses that ever

wrote ; and that Corneille's genius was superior to Racine's.

From all this dissertation on wit and genius, it is pretty evident on which side the superiority lies. But let not the Wit be discontented with his lot ; perhaps it is the milder of the two. As works of genius are difficult to be produced, so they are not easy to be estimated. A trait of wit is produced in an instant ; an instant is sufficient to determine it's value. The admiration acquired by genius is partial and slow ; the success of wit is rapid and universal. Richardson is not yet arrived at the fulness of his glory ; Voltaire gained admirers as fast as he got readers. Wit is relished by every class of mankind ; while heaven-born genius

tasted but by few. Some months  
have Sterne more reputation than Milton  
acquired in many years ; and had it not  
been for a man of wit, perhaps the au-  
thor of our sublimest poem would have  
been still but little known.

Gray beautifully says ;

“ Full many a gem of purest ray

“ serene

“ The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean

“ bear ;

“ Full many a flower is born to blush

“ unseen,

“ And waste its sweetness on the desert

“ air.”

And as many a genius remains uncult-  
ivated and unregarded in the world ; so  
is more than probable that many a

Paradise

Paradise Lost lies neglected for want of  
Addisons to point out their merits.

There are a hundred species of wit.  
It would be easy to mention them all,  
but it would be useless, unless I illustrate  
each by a quotation. This would con-  
sume a great deal of time and labour.  
I have the highest respect for my reader,  
but I must request his permission to defer  
this to another opportunity.

## LETTER X.

SIR, says a man to Swift, I have a mind to set up for a Wit. Sir, says Swift, I advise you to sit down again. This was very good advice, particularly in this country, where, that same author has observed, not one man in ten thousand has wit. Almost every body is witty in France. Why then there, and not here? The reasons are purely physical; for Englishmen ought to have twenty times more wit than Frenchmen.

Ideas are the matter of which wit is made, and the English have infinitely more ideas than the French. This arises

arises from their early education, from their being a more reading people, &c. You see this is a very strong reason why the English ought to be superior to the French in this point.

But if ideas are the materials, fancy is the instrument which operates on those materials; and here comes in the superiority of the French. Their fancies are livelier, brighter, and quicker.

The force of the imagination depends a great deal on the affluence of the animal spirits; its brightness, on the refinement of those spirits; and its quickness, on the celerity of their movement. Now, in point of copiousness of spirits, the English, I believe, have the advantage of the French. A bull has more spirits

spirits in him than an ape ; but the ape's  
 &c. spirits are always in motion, and it is  
 wh. very difficult to move the bull's. This,  
 the you see, is a case in point ; and John Bull,  
 am persuaded, has a greater quan-  
 tity of spirits than *Jack Singe*. But the  
 Frenchman's spirits are more refined and  
 quicker in their motions than ours, and  
 this for a number of reasons. I shall  
 here mention some of the principal.

A Frenchman never tastes malt liquor ;  
 he eats no butter, and his bread is light :  
 the meat in France is not near so fat as  
 it is here, and it is much better  
 dressed : the sauces are poignant, and  
 not greasy ; he eats a great deal of  
 soup and light vegetables ; he drinks in  
 moderation as much wine and water

as is necessary to dilute his dinner, and then he takes as much *good* wine, coffee and *liqueurs*, as is necessary to heat his stomach, and quicken the circulation of his blood, *and no more*. Add to this the pureness of the air, and the light society of the most amiable women in the world, in which he passes so much of his time; and you will see reason enough why his spirits should be quicker in their motion and more refined than ours.

I need not mention how opposite our manner of living is; the quantities of blood-food we eat, the quantity of bad wine we drink, the grossness of our atmosphere, nor many other causes that hinder the celerity of our fancies, and

conf

consequently impede considerably the vivacity of our wit.

However, the English do not think much of the superiority of the French, in this article. They pique themselves on having better sense and more learning than their neighbours ; and they have more sense and learning. The French allow this, and it does not give them any uneasiness. They value themselves on being wittier and more amiable than the English ; and they are wittier and more amiable. When a Frenchman has knowledge, and is grown a little steady, his company is delightful ; when an Englishman has fancy and good manners, his society is enchanting. I always thought that those two nations, blended together,

together, would produce perfection in every thing.

To return to wit. If a man is full of quick and refined spirits; if he has a number of ideas, and if he has a ready and found judgement to determine the justness of a combination as soon as it is made, that man cannot fail to have wit. If he exercises his fancy much in this way, it will acquire a great facility from practice; and he will often be witty almost without knowing it. This is another reason why the French have wit; they are continually running after it. I need not tell you why they seek it so much. You know nothing pleases more than wit does; and the whole nation has a desire to please.

I knew

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I knew an odd fellow, who told me that, whenever he had a mind to be witty, he fed himself for it some time before; as they do game-cocks, to make them fight. “ I live, Sir,” said he, upon eggs, oysters, cream, jellies, barley-broth, succulent foods of all sorts, and drink porter. This fills me with blood and spirits; but at the same time it fills me with gross humours; and I am as dull as an Alderman. I then take a medicine or two, which carries off the coarser and heavier parts of those fluids: the spirits by this, you see, become purified and refined; it only remains to put them in motion; and this I do by a page of Shakspeare, a sprightly com-

" pansion, a good gallop in a post-chair  
 " by music, coffee, or applying a nap  
 " kin steeped in spirits of wine or bran  
 " dy to my forehead. I am then a jyf  
 " witty as an angel, and happy is the Ga  
 " man or woman that comes in my no  
 " way — while the fit lasts." This was  
 an eccentric sort of Being; but this  
 thought there was good sense in what  
 he said.

Another thing in England which  
 deadens our fancies is, " that surly spi  
 " rit, Melancholy, bakes our blood  
 " and makes it *heavy, thick*; which  
 " in France, runs tickling up and down  
 " the veins, making that ideot Laugh  
 " ter hold men's eyes and strain their  
 " cheeks to idle merriment." I quo

Shakspeare as a philosopher; and you see he says melancholy clogs the motion of the blood, and consequently, if my system be a just one, annihilates fancy. Gaiety, on the contrary, accelerates the motion of the spirits, and is at once the promoter and supporter of wit. For this reason, and a thousand others, I shall conclude with a moral exhortation, in the words of an amiable (1) poet:

“ Let’s be gay,

“ While we may,”

&c. &c. &c.

(1) Gay.

## LETTER XI.

THE world is unjust to polite writers. It says they are only entertaining ; but that, being of no solid utility to mankind, they do not merit a place in the first rank of authors. If it be true that they are of no benefit to society, I shall most readily agree that they are entitled to a very small degree of esteem. *To do good* ought to be the great object of every worthy being ; and the author or artist who loses sight of this object, be his talents what they may, must always be looked upon in an inferior light.

Whoever

Whoever gives innocent pleasure, does good. And if these writers had no other merit, that alone would entitle them to a certain degree of consideration from the world. But they appear to me to benefit mankind *more* than any other class of authors; and consequently I think they deserve a degree of public favour proportioned to the advantages that society gains by their labours.

Ask any man, Who are the writers of the highest dignity? He will answer, the historians. He has answered a question which he has never examined; and which, probably, he learned by rote before he was able to examine it. Ask him a second, and he will prove what I advance. Desire him to tell you, whe-

ther he has received more pleasure and useful instruction from Mr. Addison's Spectators, or from Dr. Robertson's History of Charles the (1) Fifth, and I will venture to say he will answer, if he reflects a little, From the Spectators. Ask him then which of those two authen- works have done most good to the people of the present age, men and women; and which will do most good to all succeeding ages; if he is capable of judging coolly, and knows the world, I am per- suaded he will answer, Mr. Addison.

(1) I should be very sorry that any one should imagine I meant here to detract from Dr. Robertson's merits. I am not ignorant that he has great and universal fame throughout Europe and I well know that he deserves it.

All the ideas which have ever passed through my head, may have passed, for ought I know, through the heads of a thousand other men ; and are, for aught I can tell, printed in a hundred books. What I have just said, and what I am going to say, may have often been said and written already. I shall not deny that, because I do not know it to be true. I shall only affirm, that I have copied no man, and that all I say, good and bad, is drawn from myself, and from my own observation. I have looked upon the world a good while, and I believe I know it. I read formerly a few good books ; and chance has procured me advantages which do not happen to every body ; those of conversing with a

number of the most polished and most enlightened persons now living. From all that I have ever been able to collect from reading, seeing, thinking, and conversation, I have long since laid it up as a fixed conclusion in my mind, that refined taste and elevated morals were most intimately connected ; and that consequently the man who promotes the one does infinite service to the cause of the other.

Good sense is the foundation of morality as well as of (1) taste ; and the first point towards perfecting both is acquiring a just and solid understanding.

(1) "Tout doit tendre au bon sens."

"Scribendi recte sapere est principium  
" fons."

The  
Ri

The great leading principles of taste  
are also the first principles in morals.  
(1) Decency and truth are equally essen-  
tial to both ; and what I say is so certain,  
that those two sentences which have been  
so often quoted as principles of taste, are  
to be found in two epistles which are written  
entirely on moral subjects.

A very considerable part of the young  
men of this country run into vice, not  
from natural vicious inclinations, but  
from want of knowing how to dispose of  
their time. If they had a taste for let-  
ters and for the arts, *that* would open to  
them a never-failing fountain of amuse-  
ment ;

(1) " Quid verum atque decens."

Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est  
" aimable.

ment; and at the same time that it afforded them entertainment, would, by refining their understandings, and polishing their imaginations, make them loath the low pleasures of riot and debauchery, in which they now waste their time, and destroy their constitutions.

Another advantage of taste is that of awakening the feelings. Few men are born without feeling; but it lies dormant in many; in many it is perverted; and in a great number it is hardened by their commerce with the worthless part of the world. The power of taste is sufficiently strong, not only to call out the seeds of humanity that lie, if I may so say, asleep within our breasts; but what is infinitely stronger, and indeed almost astonishing,

is capable of correcting cruelty. I speak from fact. Augustus was an uncommonly cruel man. He delighted in bloodshed. While he was feasting himself with the inhuman spectacle of gladiators butchering each other, Mæcenas, who stood behind him, and was a man of taste and feeling, no longer able to support the sight, cried, (1) *Tandem desine, rnifex.* “Executioner, will you never have done?” *Tandem* shews Mæcenas’s

(1) The boldest word that ever was said to a sovereign. The famous Duke de Crillon’s answer to Henry the Fourth of France, though in different style, was very bold too. When the Duke came one day into the circle, the king said; *Ilà le p'us brave homme de mon royaume.* Crillon replied directly; *Vous avez menti, Sire, à vous.*

impatience,

impatience, and that the exclamation burst from his soul. Augustus, no less struck with the animation of his minister's manner, than with the force of his expression, instantly left the amphitheatre, and never returned to it again.

What was this but a lesson of taste? When they came home, what Mæcenas said to him I cannot tell. I know by (1) text, I know it was a good one, and I have reason to believe he handled it like a master. I say *I have reason to believe*, because I know the character of Augustus changed. Mæcenas inspired him with a love of the arts, gave him a taste for the compositions and society of

(1) “ Tandem define, carnifex.”

en of letters, and, to the great advantage both of his subjects and of his memory, converted a cruel tyrant into a mild and beneficent monarch.

## LETTER XII.

I HAVE said (1) already that taste is a combination of judgement and feeling. Its province is to choose and to reject. A man of genius sits down to compose. He often rushes into matter from a sudden impulse; but oftener his fancy grows heated by degrees. He writes a phrase, and leans upon his elbow; he thinks a while, and then he finds another idea. As his imagination works, it warms; he starts from

(1) Letter XXIV. Vol. II. of "Letters from an English Traveller."

s seat, and walks about his room: ideas and images crowd faster on him than he is able to write them down. This is not the moment for taste to be employed. Let him not check the current of his thoughts, but write them all in the disorder in which they come. The torrent, he may be sure, will bring rubbish along with it; the office of taste is to clear this rubbish away. He should then examine with scrupulous severity every line that he has written, to preserve the true, the noble, and the fine; and to reject the low, the common, and the impudent. Shakspeare wrote in the manner I have described; but he rarely read over what he had written.

When

When Milton read over his episode Sin and Death, had his taste been pure he would have thrown it in the fire; but he was in love with some real beauties in it; and for their sake he pardoned its disgusting defects.

One should imagine that taste was so difficult to be acquired; and yet how many capital writers are there who want it! Or rather indeed how few are there who possess it! It's grand points are contained in a very narrow compass; they lie in two words, truth and decency: *Quid verum atque decens.* Its minutenesses are as impossible to be pointed out as they art to be enumerated. The man who never has a word

erature that violates decency or truth; and will never have a gross fault of bad taste in his works. But there are different degrees of good taste. To possess the highest (as Lord Bristol does) one must unite an unerring judgement to exquisite sensibility.

Every faculty of man is perfected by practice. He acquires a justness in his temper, a chasteness in his eye, a strength in his judgement, and a vivacity and delicacy in his feelings, by frequent use of those several senses and powers. Few men are born without feeling, and consequently without a possibility of having taste. As judgement can only be the result of knowledge, to form it requires

time and labour ; and unless the judgement be just, the more feeling a man has, the falser his taste will be. To support this idea, I mention the Italians who have great feeling ; but, not having principles or right grounds to judge or have the falsest and most extravagant notions of any people in Europe. I speak here of the nation in general and of their taste for poetry in particular.

I do not write for men of the world who are already formed, or for men of letters, many of whom are able to instruct me. I address myself only to uninstructed youth. To form the judgement of a young man to any art, poetry for example

Example, let him read none but the best  
 books of the chasteſt writers. Let  
 RUTH and DEGENCY be his leading  
 principles. Let Boileau, Horace, and  
 Longinus be his perpetual guides. They  
 are the great legislators of taste. They  
 have ſaid every thing; but as, *in confe-  
 quence of their good taste*, they have com-  
 preſſed their ſenſe in a ſmall compaſſ,  
 they muſt be read often to be completely  
 understood. Sometimes a line, ſome-  
 times a word is pregnant with meaning.  
 To comprehend them clearly, they muſt  
 be meditated on.

Those three critics well digeſted, and  
 joined to the reading of Homer, Sopho-  
 cles, Virgil, Tasso, Metastasio, Racine,

Pope and Addison, will form a perfect taste. A competent knowledge of all those languages, and that taste I speak of, may be acquired in infinitely less time than is generally imagined.

## LETTER XIII.

THEY say the present generation is bad; and they assure us the next will be worse. I do not know how true that may be; but I will venture to assert, that every young person who reads this Letter till he has fixed the principles it contains firmly in his mind, will be the better for it as long as he lives.

This Letter, dear young Sir, will shew neither wit, taste, nor talents in me: it will only shew labour. It will be a short compilation of principles, drawn from my three favourite critics,

to help you to form your taste. I flatter myself that by this I may do you real service; because I am persuaded, if I make your taste better, I shall make your morals better; and if I make your morals better, I shall make you happier.

For fear you should not feel the full force of the compliment I pay you in compiling for you, I must assure you that it costs me much less trouble to write than to quote. While I draw from myself, writing is a pleasure to me. While I copy from others, it is exceedingly tiresome; and while I am searching for what is to be copied, it costs me both time and toil.

There is a very intimate connection between the arts. When you are capable of judging poetry perfectly, you will be able, with very little application, to acquire a just taste in the others.

My object, then, is to give you some general principles by which you may be enabled to judge most poetical compositions with tolerable justness, and to feel a certain degree of pleasure from their beauties. I suppose that you understand yet no language intimately but English.

The three great points on which good taste depends are TRUTH (1),

(1) "Quid verum atque decens . . . ."

"Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est  
" aimable.

"Tout doit tendre au bon sens."

DECENCY, and GOOD SENSE (1). If a line is ever so pleasing to the ear by its harmony, or ever so dazzling to the imagination by brilliancy of thought or splendour of expression, if it offends sound sense, decency, or truth, it is not a good line.

Consider what a poet is. He is not a person who by mechanical labour makes faultless verses. The man alone deserves this honourable distinction, who is possessed of genius; who has a superior portion of enthusiasm, of that ethereal spirit which Horace calls *divinus*.

(1) These are words which I have often mentioned; but they cannot be too often repeated.

If a man who has a capability of saying great  
and elevated (1) things.

Examine if your poet is naturally (2)  
sublime and sublime: if he is full of  
(3) happy boldness: if there is a spi-  
rited

(1) "Ingenium cui sit, cui mens divinior,  
" atque os

Magna sonaturum, *des nominis hujus honorem.*"

*Os magna sonaturum* is generally thought to  
refer to expressions. If I understand Latin,  
*Magna* can refer only to things.

(2) "Naturâ sublimis & acer."

(3) "Feliciter audet."

You must pay particular attention to the word  
*opy.* When Tullus insults Coriolanus, by  
calling him,

"Thou boy of tears!"

the Roman answers;

"Boy! false slave,

"If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there

"That, like an eagle in a dove-coat, I

"Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli."

*Flutter'd*

rited energy and force both in his words and (4) things.

*Flutter'd* is extremely bold, but very happy so. When this metaphor is examined, it is found to be a very daring one; but it is so introduced by the simile, and so fortunately placed, that it scarce appears to be a figurative expression; and that is an additional merit.

When Shakspeare makes Cæsar say;

“ Danger knows full well

“ That Cæsar is more dangerous than he,

“ We were two lions litter'd in one day,

“ And I the older and more terrible;”

he makes him say a most *unhappy* boldness. If you attend to the first principle, you can make no mistake in deciding whether a thought or expression is happily bold, or the contrary. Bring it before the bar of Good Sense, and it determines instantly.

(4) — “ Acer spiritus ac vis

“ Et verbis et rebus inest.”

Third

Things here is a general term, which means thoughts, images, and sentiments.

It is not sufficient that a poem is (1) beautiful; that it's matter and language be both unexceptionable; it must also be harmonious, interesting, and agreeable; and, what is of greater importance than all the rest, it must *affect* the reader, and kindle in his soul whatever passions or motions it pleases.

Another point, which you are to consider as of particular importance, is the *subject* of your poet.. Did he mean to

(1) " Non satis est pulchra esse poemata, dul-  
" cia sunto ;

" Et quocunque volunt animum auditoris  
" agunto."

*please, or to instruct?* If he has succeeded in neither, he is of the last class: if he has succeeded in both, he is of the (2) <sup>first</sup>

These are the principal points. I shall only add to them a definition of the Sublime taken from Boileau; its sources mentioned by Longinus; and a description of it and of its effects, taken also from this same critic.

“ The sublime is a certain force in discourse, proper to elevate and transport the soul; and which proceeds either from grandeur of thought and nobleness of sentiment, or from magnificence of words, or an harmonious

(2) “ Aut prodeesse volunt aut delectare poetarum  
“ Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile  
“ dulci.”

“ lively

lively, and animated turn of expression; that is to say, from any one of these particulars regarded separately, or, what makes the perfect sublime, from these three particulars joined together...."

"(1) The first and most excellent source of the *Sublime* is, a boldness and grandeur in the thoughts.

"The second is the *pathetic*, or the power of raising the passions to a violent and even enthusiastic degree.

"The next consists in a skilful application of figures.

"The fourth is a noble and graceful manner of expression.

(1) Smith's Longinus.

"The

“ The last is the structure or composition of periods, in all possible dignity and grandeur. . . .

“ . . . The mind is naturally elevated by the true *Sublime*, and so sensibly affected with its lively strokes, that it swells in transport and an inward pride, as if what was only heard had been the product of its own invention.

“ He therefore, who has a competent share of natural and acquired taste, may easily discover the value of any performance from a bare recital of it. He finds that it transports not his soul, nor exalts his thoughts; that it carries not up into his mind ideas more enlarged than what the mere sounds

the words convey, but on attentive examination it's dignity lessens and declines; he may conclude, that whatever pierces no deeper than the ears, can never be the true *Sublime*. *That* on the contrary is grand and lofty, which the more we consider, the greater ideas we conceive of it; whose force we cannot possibly withstand; which immediately sinks deep, and makes such impressions on the mind, as cannot be easily worn out or effaced. In a word, you may pronounce *that* sublime, beautiful, and genuine, which always pleases, and takes equally with all sorts of men. For when persons of different humours, ages, professions, and inclinations,

tions, agree in the same joint approbation of *any* performance, then the union of assent, this combination of so many different judgements, stamps an high and indisputable value on the performance, which meets with such general (1) applause."

If Shakspeare had been a Sovereign, and Boileau, Horace, and Longinus had been three of his courtiers, I should have thought that every syllable quoted here had been written on purpose to flatten him.

(1) Whether the reader will thank me for this letter is more than I can tell; but I know it has given me a great deal of trouble.

## LETTER XIV.

IN those letters upon wit, taste, and genius, you have observed that judgement is equally necessary to them all; that without it imagination runs riot, and feelings are false. I have called taste a union of judgement and feeling; heretofore, a combination of a sound judgement, and a lively fancy; and genius I have analysed into a glowing and vigorous imagination, operating upon a strong and solid judgement.

A man may have judgement without either wit, genius, or taste. He may have taste without wit or genius; wit

without taste or genius; and genius without wit or taste. Happy the man who possesses the three; and happy is the author of the (1) School for Scandal.

Men have indisputably more genius than women; but as far as I have been able to judge from what I have seen of the world, women have more aptitude for wit and taste than men. I do not say they have more wit and taste, but I say they have more aptitude for them. Their fancies are livelier; their feelings finer. The point they fail in is judgement. But judgement comes from cul-

(1) There is, in my mind, more genius in the Screen-Scene than in any play of Voltaire's; and Voltaire's theatre is his fort.

re. If women had nearly the same  
means taken to form their understandings  
at men have, I am persuaded they  
would be superior to men in taste and wit.

Of all the countries I know or have  
heard of, England is that which has pro-  
duced the greatest Geniuses, and the  
greatest number of Geniuses; France has  
produced the finest (1) Wits; and Athens  
persons of the most perfect taste.

(1) The country which has produced the  
best Wits, after France, is Ireland. You laugh,  
I suppose, because it is a native of that country  
who writes this phrase. You'll cease to laugh,  
when you read the names of Congreve, Swift,  
Goldsmith, Jephson, Burke,  
and Sheridan.

## LETTER XV.

**V**IRTUE, propriety, and pleasure lie in the middle: don't they Madam? There is a certain central point in which (1) rectitude is placed, and above or below which are error and absurdity. Prudence, for example, is the mean between cunning and folly; dignity, between abject humility and forbidding pride; courage, between cowardice and ferocity; and delicacy, which is to be the subject of this letter, lies, if

(1) "Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique  
" fines,

"Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere  
" rectum."

mistake not, between squeamishness and indecency.

Delicacy, the daughter of Chastity, is no more known in Italy than her mother. She *is* known in France, but not so well as she is in England. *Why* (1)  
English

(1) The women of England are superior to those of France in delicacy, dignity, and deep amiability. The French ladies are superior to the English in wit, grace, vivacity, and amiableness. I would be understood here, as everywhere else, to speak with exceptions. I have known women in France possess all the great qualities that adorn the English ladies ; and women in England full of all the captivating qualities that belong to the ladies of France. Dignity and amiableness are the great points that distinguish the women of those two countries. An English woman of birth values herself on supporting her *dignity* ; a French woman of the

English women should be superior to others in this point I cannot tell, more than I can why they have better shaped skins, and more agreeable speaking voices. Perhaps the general reason is because they are chaster. Delicacy is only a refinement of decency; and decency is the inseparable companion of chastity. You will ask why are they chaster? Because they have a colder climate, more pride, juster notions about religion, and because they receive better (1) educations. A girl of condition

highest rank piques herself on being *amiable*. It is extremely difficult to unite dignity and amiableness. Lady Clermont unites them.

(1) There is another reason, and a very strong one, why women are chaster in England than elsewhere, but every body knows it.

much

much better educated here than any where else. Her mother teaches her nothing but virtue and decorum, both by precept and example. She is also extremely attentive to the females that come about her daughter, and to the company she keeps. Children study countenances; and a mother's look, on expression dropped before her, is a lesson of delicacy, or the contrary, to her child. I have observed that English mothers pay a most particular attention to this (1) point.

In

(1) I do not know how an English woman would have answered the question put by a French girl of ten years old to her mother: "Pray, Mama, what's the difference between an Italian singer and a man?" — "The same

H 4

" difference,

In this country few women of condition or character err in conversation against the strictest decency either of thought or of expression. For one who trespasses against delicacy in company there are twenty who deaden society by prudery and squeamishness. These are either a particular class of women, who turn pale when the word *love* is mentioned, or the idea hinted; or they are affected women, who value themselves upon their superior nicety in this point, and then they are really insupportable. These dragons in delicacy do not con-

“ difference, my dear, that there is between a bull and an ox.”—“ And pray, Mama, what is that?”—“ Why, my love, the bull is the father of the calf; and the ox is his uncle.”

ler that love is a very innocent as well  
a very amiable passion ; that all the  
eas belonging to it are pleasing ; and  
at a word in conversation which just  
ghtens upon you, and raifes a train of  
greeable images, is not only not repre-  
ensible, but deserves praise, because it  
hears and animates society. God knows  
here is sadness and dullness enough in  
the world, it is cruel to preclude any  
armless gaiety ; and such surely is all  
gaiety which does not inflame the pas-  
sions, nor raife any gross ideas.

People who live by themselves, or  
who live only *for* themselves, may act as  
they please ; but all those who come into  
society ought to consider that they owe  
something *to* society, and that the most  
useful

useful and agreeable contribution they can offer it is innocent pleasure. I say it most useful, because I am firmly persuaded that he who gives innocent pleasure does good; moral and physical good.

The reverse is equally true. The person who brings a gloom into company damps the vivacity of that company, checks the motion of their spirits, retarded, to a certain degree, the circulation of their blood, and does them positive harm. These are minute points; and the world in general will not feel them, nor will a robust man, in full health, feel the truth of the example I am going to mention. Suppose a woman of a delicate constitution has supped well, and that

chearful

earful friend comes in when she has  
one, and chats an hour with her : I say  
that woman will sleep well, and will  
have a good digestion. Suppose the  
friend that enters is a gloomy and me-  
nacholy character ; it is a hundred to one  
that this lady's rest is broken, and that  
she has a head-ach the next day.

Squeamishness is certainly a smaller  
fault than indelicacy ; but it *is* a fault,  
and a very disagreeable one. *True de-  
licacy* lies between ; equally remote from  
vivacity and moroseness.

and all mod' n causes' b'gins

wh I b'g n'g mod' n' st'nd'g

## LETTER XVI.

**W**OMEN are the source of much good as well as of much evil in the world. To them men owe delicacy and it is for that reason I went up to them as the fountain from which the delicacy flowed; and I believe all that I said of that quality in them, is equally just when applied to writing.

It is not then a little surprising that English women being indisputably superior to all others in this point, English writers should err against it so flagrantly and so universally. Except very few, there is scarce a man who has

the least pretension to wit that can be read by any person of common decency, not to speak of people of a refined taste. Their grand leading idea seems to be that ribaldry is wit; that wit is charming, and that therefore &c. Now wit is charming, and ribaldry *may* be witty; but I will tell these writers that the wittiest ribaldry never did, nor ever *can* please but readers of debauched morals and vitiated tastes. Nay, even a man of loose morals, if he has any taste, though he may be pleased at the first reading of an indecent piece of wit, will be disgusted with it at the second.

Not to mention numbers that are scandalously indecent, how shocking to decency are several of the most celebrated

brated and admired writers we have  
How shamelessly have Congreve, Van-  
brugh, and Sterne in his *Tristram Shandy*  
indulged themselves in writings worth  
only of the lowest authors! One is sorry  
for it in such men as these, because they  
had real talents; but we may affirm  
safely, that it was in the moments in  
which they wanted talents they were  
forced to substitute indecency for wit.  
A sort of proof of this is, that there is no  
species of writing in which it is so easy to  
excel; and that we see the very dregs of  
talents, all over the world, who are ca-  
pable of nothing else, succeed wonder-  
fully in this. I am glad I have lived to see the  
day that these mens works are fallen into  
the disrepute they merit. A single man,

when

when he has real abilities, is capable of producing an astonishing effect on the mind of a nation. Such a man does now exist. I see he has already opened the eyes of many; for even the multitude will admire bad till they see better; and I will venture to prophesy, that if Mr. Sheridan produces a few other pieces equal to the *School for Scandal*, the representations of Congreve and Vanbrugh will not be supported even by the gallants.

I shall not fully the purity of my page by quotations from these authors. Their words are rocks above the surface of the ocean, which the most unskilful mariner may see, and may avoid if he pleases. I am forced to quote some passages, which,

which, though they do not offend good  
morals, are a strong violation of delicacy  
of taste. I could wish that those sheets  
contained nothing but beauties. I quote  
defects with reluctance. But these rocks  
are beneath the surface; and if I  
is not warned, the youthful pilot may  
easily be wrecked. The author I mean  
principally to quote, had all the advantages  
a writer could possess. His birth  
was noble, and his talents great; but  
in an enlightened age, he lived hap-  
pily with its greatest ornaments. No  
thing was wanting that could exalt his  
imagination, or refine his taste. He was  
full of learning, and full of labour. No  
man ever paid more attention to his  
style. Is it not then amazing that a

cretan

Vol

etary of state, the most splendid lum-  
ry of his time, the dazzling and all-  
complished Bolingbroke, should often  
scend to the language of the stews,  
and debase his writings by images that  
ould have been condemned for vulga-  
y in the mouth of his footman?  
*wd, bully, whore*, are the terms he  
akes use of; particularly the two last,  
his *Idea of a Patriot King*, his most  
borate performance; and the last of  
se three words I have quoted he uses  
the end of that Letter, in the midst  
a dissertation on decorum, decency,  
propriety, and grace. Could he be ig-  
rant that those expressions, which de-  
cency forbade him to utter in the hearing  
his Sovereign, or of any woman, or

even man that he respected; could I say, want to be informed, that what was an insult to the ear was not less an insult to the eye? and that what decorum forbade him to speak, decorum also forbade him to write?

There are men who will defend these expressions. They will say, they are forcible and energetic. I grant they are, and that is a reason why they should be used; but they are indecent, and that is a stronger reason why they should not be used. In every instance the proper terms are the strongest; but when they violate decency, no writer of taste ever employed them.

The truth is, man is an imitative animal. He copies, in despight of him

himself, the beings that surround him. Lord Bolingbroke was generally in the society of Nobles like himself, and his style and ideas then resemble his society. But Lord Bolingbroke was a man; he sometimes forgot his dignity; and his treacherous writings betray him to the world, and shew that he degraded himself in the company of harlots, who eclipsed for a time the rays of a most glorious and brilliant imagination.

In another place this great writer speaks, by *allusion*, "of a race who carry on their skins, exposed to publick sight, the *scabs* and *blotches* of their distemper." Every thing may be denied; and that, it may be said, is palpable and striking. The thing, in na-

ture, was never seen without loathing the beholder. Can then the image of it be offered without disgusting the reader?

I do not know a more offensive idea than this last, except one which he has in his second Letter on the *Study of History*. — “ And the Hottentot, who re-“ turned from Europe, stripped him-“ self naked as soon as he came home“ put on his bracelets of *guts* and gar-“ bage, and grew stinking and lousy a-“ fast as he could.” My God! What writing is this! But no, Lord Bolingbroke, I acquit you of these nauseous images, and of these indecent expressions. I blame you only for the choice of your company. The Women of the

Town are to be censured for the one; the (1) Dean of St. Patrick is to be condemned for the other.

(1) Swift had great parts; but the author of *The Lady's Dressing-Room* never suspected there was such an idea as *Delicacy of Taste*. He ought have followed Lear's advice, and to have taken a great deal of civet to sweeten his imagination.

## LETTER XVII.

THOUGH Lord Bolingbroke mad  
a slip now and then, he was upon  
the whole a man of fine taste: so was  
Pope, and so was Addison. Addison, in  
my mind, had the best and surest taste  
of the three. He begins one of his  
Spectators with a stroke of wit, that one  
must be squeamish indeed to quarrel  
with. "Though a monosyllable," says  
he, "be my delight." Now that is  
charming, Madam: it is a man that  
speaks; and what makes it admirable is  
that it would have been equally good  
if it had been a woman; because you know

he monosyllable meant is—*love*. Some of Pope's strokes are not so Attic; in the Rape of the Lock, where he talks of bodies changed to different forms by spleen, he says,

“Men prove with-child as powerful

“fancy works,

“*And maids turn'd bottles, call aloud for*

“*corks* :”

oor, paltry, pitiful ! As Swift corrupted Bolingbroke, so Bolingbroke corrupted Pope. This is despicable; nor is the original of this turn, wretched as it is, his own; so that he not only stole, but stole awkwardly. He would have been condemned for that theft both at Athens and at Sparta.

A little farther on he is happier. Bo  
linda closes her lamentation for the los  
of her Lock with these lines :

“ Oh ! hadst thou cruel been conten

“ to seize

“ Hairs less in sight, or any hairs bu

“ these.”

I have known many squeamish people  
translate that into indelicacy : that is  
their fault, and not the author's : it is  
not indelicate ; it is fair, light, elegant  
and gay. It puts me in mind of an answer  
given by a sprightly French girl to the  
Duke de Roquelaure. As he was passing  
through Toulouse, he saw her at a ball,  
he was struck with her figure, and de-  
fired one of his *aids de camp* to tell her

was beautiful as an angel, and that he  
would give fifty guineas for a single hair  
under her eyebrows; meaning, I sup-  
pose, one of her eye-lashes. "Give my  
compliments to the duke," says she;  
tell him I am happy to have pleased  
him; but that I am not a retail-mer-  
chant (*une marchande en détail*); if he  
shusess the whole at that price, he shall  
have them with pleasure."

Shakspeare has many strokes that are  
quisitely delicate. His plays are full  
the coarsest and grossest things; but  
every body knows how many excuses he  
has. I shall quote two passages, which  
come into my mind now, in support of  
what I have advanced. If I looked for  
others, I am sure I should find enough.

Ophelia.

Ophelia tells Hamlet she had rem-  
brances of his, which she wished to  
him back.

“ Hamlet. I never gave you augh-

“ Ophelia. My honour'd Lord,

“ know right well, you did;

“ And with them words of such s-

“ breath compos'd,

“ As made the things more rich:

“ perfume lost,

“ Take these again.”

The other example is in the fourth  
act of Othello.

“ Æmilia. Alas, Iago, my Lord,

“ so bewhor'd her,

“ Thrown such despight and he-

“ terms upon her,

“ That true hearts cannot bear it.

“ Desdemona

Desdemona. *Am I that name, Iago?*

Iago. *What name, fair Lady?*

Def. *Such as she said my Lord did  
"say I was."*

Richardson is admirable for every species of delicacy; for delicacy of (1) sentiment, image, language, action, every thing. I doubt whether he has

(1) The French writers and French women are inferior to the women and writers of England in delicacy of wit; but inferior to them in delicacy of sentiment. Were I to mention a lady who has refined wit to the most delicate sensibility, should be—but I dare not name her—I am afraid of wounding her modesty—I know Lady Elizabeth Foster would blush at her panegyric;

“Fast from herself she tremblingly retires,  
“Nor trusts that worth which all the world  
admires.”

once

once erred against this point in all works, unless where he intended to do I mean by *characteristic* traits. It might be disputed whether it is allowable to do there. I remember a stroke of wit of that appeared to me to be refined and delicate to a very high degree. "Lover says Miss Byron, " like spaniels, will fawn at your feet, or be ready to leap into your lap." That is the touch of a master.

## LETTER XVIII.

YOU have wit, taste, sense, and sentiment, and you don't like Richardson. Well, that is to me astonishing. He has but one great fault, and fortunately every body feels it. The

## Richardson's

If any moral object could be thought worthy the attention of the nation; or any object which tended towards a perfect system of education for youth. Richardson's genius was immense. His misfortune was that he did not

know

Richardson's views were grand. His soul was noble, and his heart was ex-  
cellent. He formed a plan that embrac-  
ed all human nature. His object was  
the benefit mankind. His knowledge  
of the world shewed him that happiness  
was to be attained by man, only in pro-  
portion as he practised virtue. His good  
sense then shewed him that no practical  
system of morality existed; and the same  
good sense told him that nothing but  
know the Ancients. Had he but been  
acquainted with one single principle, *Omne super-  
vacuum pleno de pectore manat*, (all super-  
ficialities tire); he would not have satiated his rea-  
son as he has done. There might be made out  
Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison two works  
which would be *both* the most entertaining,  
the most useful, that ever were written.

of morality, *put into action*, could work with efficacy on the minds of them. Sermons and Essays, experience had told him, were ineffectual. The manner of them was dry and unintelligent to young people; and arguments addressed to what is weakest in youth, their understandings, he clearly perceived, were without effect. He saw further, that example was the great point which formed the young; and he saw that man was composed of passions and imagination as well as of understanding. Those were his general principles; upon those principles he reasoned thus: Mankind is naturally good, for it is natural to meet young people with bad arts. A young man then coming into

the

the world wishes to be perfect. How shall he learn? The world is bad school; and precepts scattered and down in books of morality are little use. An example would f  
him; but where is it to be found. None exists. I will then create one for him. I will set before him a model of perfection. The more he imitates it the more perfect he will be; the more perfect he is, the happier he will be.

As he reasoned upon man, so he reasoned upon woman. He aimed at less than bestowing felicity on the generation he saw rising before him, and on every one that was to succeed. And had he not had powers to accomplish this aim, his wish was so grand,

noble

le, and of such a superior order of  
evolence, that that alone would have  
titld him to immortality ; I had al-  
l said canonisation.

But such is the perverseness and weak-  
ness of mankind, that what constitutes  
chardson's greatest merit, is consi-  
dered by many as a capital defect in his  
nception. They object that such a  
man as Clarissa, and such a man as  
Charles Grandison, having never ex-  
isted, the author has created palpable  
imæras, and consequently his creations  
are useless and unaffectiong. How con-  
tent are the reasonings of men ! Cen-  
tury after century, and country after  
country, have vied with each other in  
raising the work and the author of the

Venus of Medici. Yet this work may be universally allowed to be far inferior in merit to Richardson's Clarissa. No woman ever came near the beauty of this statue; yet, has that diminished the merits of the author? Has he not always been, and is he not hourly and justly admired for the ingenuity of his idea, though this idea is totally bereft of profit to the world?

Not so with Clarissa: she must possess every female that beholds her. Though the whole of these two imaginary beings did evidently never exist, yet so great has been the mastery of these uncommon artists, that there is not a particle in the composition of the statue, nor a trait

the character or conduct of the heroine, at can be said to deviate in the mildest degree from the precise line of nature and of truth.

Richardson has done no more than animate the Venus of Medici. The Grecian sculptor had *created* every creature's best, a marble body: the English writer created equally of every creature's best, a soul, a mind, a genius for that body. Can any man pretend to be consistent with himself, who admires the one, and condemns the other? Suppose the two were work of the Greek, and I will venture to say, this would have been the language of the world: "When the

“ sculptor created that form, he  
“ puffed men; but when he created the  
“ genius and that soul, he rivalled the  
“ Gods.”

## LETTER XIX.

THE writers of England excell those of all other nations in the pathetic; and Richardson in this point is, I think, superior to all his countrymen. He makes one cry too much: and by a very singular talent, peculiar to himself alone, he fills our eyes almost as often by elevated sentiments, as he does by tender ones. He abounds with strokes of greatness, sometimes in the actions and sometimes in the sentiments of his characters, which raise the reader's soul, and make the tear of generosity spring into his eye he knows not whence.

Here are three strokes of pathos; tell me which of them you like best.

When the tyrannical Capulet says to his daughter;

"Good morrow basugan! 'Tis Thursday is near;

"If you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;

"If you be not, hang, beg, starve, and die i' th' streets;

"For by my soul! I'll ne'er acknowledge my child thee."

Then Juliet;

"Is there no Pity fitting in the clouds,

"That sees into the bottom of my grief,

"O sweet my mother, cast me not away,

"Is not that earnest appeal to heaven  
most solemnly moving? and then that

passionate

affionate address to her mother, as her only resource after Providence, is exceedingly affecting. - The confusion too placing her words, *O sweet my mother,* or *O my sweet mother,* is infinitely beautiful: it is somewhat like Virgil's *te, me adsum qui feci.*

The next is from Otway. - When Daffier gives Belvidera to Renault, and gives him with her a dagger, desiring him, when he proves unworthy, to strike to her heart; Belvidera's answer is imitably fine.

“ O thou unkind one !

“ ... Have I deserv'd this from you ?  
“ Look on me, tell me,  
“ Why am I separated from thy love ?

" If I am false, accuse me; but, if true,  
 " Don't, pr'ythee, don't in poverty forsake  
 " me,

" But pity the sad heart that's torn with  
 " parting."

No man can write better than this. The line, " Don't, pr'ythee, don't in poverty forsake me," is above praise. Every word of it is a beauty. The words " but if true," introduce this affectionate close with peculiar happiness, because the audience, knowing that she is true, feels more deeply for her sorrows.

The third is from Clarissa. After she has escaped from Lovelace, and is lodged at a Glove-shop, King-Street, Covent Garden, she writes a letter to her nurse,

rs. Norton, in which are these words :

I am afraid *my Poor*, as I used to call the good creatures to whose necessities I was wont to administer by your faithful hands, have missed me of late. But now, alas ! I am poor myself." When Clarissa's story is known, and the whole of her character, and her present situation considered, " *But now, alas ! I am poor myself,*" is irresisti-

(1).

(1) It is injuring Richardson to quote a trait pathos from him, when he has whole volumes in which it is impossible to read without crying and sighing from beginning to end.

I feel for the injustice that is done this author, (1), I will venture to assert, is second to none that ever wrote. It is astonishing, however,

how

I do not believe any language, and  
 less or less I am, too, via his, and  
 how many men of parts I have met with  
 speak of him with contempt. Most of them, it  
 true, have condemned him without reading him  
 and they have condemned him because he is  
 writer of *Novels* or *Romances*. What is a name  
 What signifies how a work is called; whether  
 it is a Romance, a Novel, a Story, or a History  
 No matter for the title; examine the work  
 Does it grapple the attention (to use Sh  
 speare's expression) with hooks of Steel? Do  
 it move, does it elevate, does it enlighten, does  
 it amuse? These are the points to be enqui  
 into, and not how it is called.

I have known many other clever people, who  
 have dipped into *Clarissa*, and who hold it a  
 it's author very cheap. Some of these men have  
 gone through a volume or two, others have  
 read a number of Letters here and there, have  
 then formed their opinions of it's merits, and  
 thrown away the book. Richardson's object

word

modern, can shew three traits equal to these.

to write a volume or a letter, it was to be a work. If the entire work be not examined, it is impossible to judge it. He built a house. The stair-case is too high: if it had wider steps, it would be better. One tires sometimes before one gets to the head of it. But go on; enter into the apartments; observe their distribution, their proportion, their effect; see their *ensemble*; examine their Whole; and then answer if ever there was an edifice equal to its beauty, grandeur, sublimity, and magnificence. There never was in any country. The introduction into the story of Clariſſa is a little long; but when you pass that, there never was a story equally interesting, or equally affecting; and I assert, without dread of being contradicted by any man of taste and talents, that reads it through, that there does not exist in the universe, a work *equal* to it for WIT, PINTIMENT and SENSE.

LET

## LETTER XX.

A Number of the first wits at Paris being assembled at the house of a famous Lady *Bel Esprit*, talked naturally enough of literature. The election of *Corneille*, and the pathos of *Racine*, the purity of *Boileau*, and the depth of *Moliere*, were supported by different advocates. At last says one, suppose we were all this instant to be carried to the Bastile, and doomed to pass there the remainder of our days, suppose that we were suffered to have each, any author's works that we chose, but that we were never to be permitted

make a second choice; who is the  
author each man would chuse, to cheer  
the dreariness of a perpetual solitude?

Let no one speak, but let every man  
name the name of the author he would  
prefer. They all wrote the same name,  
was that of La Fontaine. A greater  
compliment, I suppose, never was paid  
to a writer.

Had a similar question been put at  
London among English Wits, I fancy  
Shakspeare would have been named;  
in modern Rome, it would have been  
Racisto: in ancient Rome, I believe, it  
would have been Horace.

La Fontaine appears to me to be the  
Correggio of Poetry. The Graces con-  
fected the pen of the one, as they did  
the

the pencil of the other. They have both negligences and inaccuracies, which they seem not to have troubled themselves about. La Fontaine wrote a Fable; when he read it, says he, there's a syllable too much in that line; to correct it, I must change a word; the word expresses happily my meaning:

I lose it, I lose a beauty; and I gain a faultless, but insipid line. One beauty compensates six faults; the fault of the beauty shall both rest. My line hobbles; but that word shall impress a sentiment on the heart, or present a picture to the imagination.

Correggio painted his Night. His object was the Virgin and Child. The canvas was large; and, says he, I must

it. What shall I put in the top? By some angels: so he has scattered three or four sprawling figures in the top of the picture. These, I suppose, painted in a morning, and never meant they should be looked at. If the eye wanders to any other part of the canvas, thought he, it will not fix there, it will soon come back to my Child and Virgin. I meant to put my force *there*, to shew there the magic powers of my pencil; and I disregard the suffrage of any man who is capable of condemning me for weakness, where I did not mean to be strong. If I have been ill-disposed, or a finger ill-drawn, it is because I did not think the drawing of that finger, or the disposition of that

that leg, of any importance. I sought effect. I strove to animate my cloth, to paint soul and grace, to charm the eye to touch the heart, to enchant the imagination. Have I succeeded?

There never were two more amiable artists than those. There never were two artists whose works excited more agreeable sensations, nor whose productions appear to have cost them less Ease and *naturalness* (1) distinguish them equally. Other artists force you to admire them. These you feel yourself inclined to love. You are satisfied with knowing the works of other poets and painters; but you wish to have been

(1) I mean *naïveté*.

acquainted with the persons of Correggio  
and La Fontaine—*O fortunati ambo! si  
evid mea—*

As I have said Correggio is the La Fontaine of painting, so I think Albano is Anacreon, Raphael it's Virgil, and Rubens it's Homer.

## LETTER XXI.

MADAME de la Sabliere, a man of condition in France, who shared with Lewis the Fourteenth the honour of patronising La Fontaine, used to call him her Fable-tree (*son Fablier*). She said he produced fables spontaneously as an apple-tree does apples. That is very prettily said. And the natural ease which runs through all his works proves that this saying is as sensible as pretty.

The French are, with great reason, proud of this writer. The only author who can expect his works to live, is

communicates instruction agreeably; no forms to himself a system of never parting from strict truth, and of presenting pictures, drawn only from Nature, in an agreeable and pleasing point of view. This author is La Fontaine. He is an insinuating moralist, who, while seems only to think of amusing his reader, steals into his heart the mildest and most amiable virtues. His sense is always just; but he had the art to dress philosophy with smiles, and to render that goddess truly engaging, who seems only formed to command.

No mortal ever told a story better. Mirth and good sense, reason and grace, are mixed in all his narrations; rapid, forcible, and varied, he never astonishes,

but never fails to charm. Reading fables, you are surprised to find rhyme for what you have read does not look like composition ; it appears to be the language of an agreeable companion, who converses with ease, with elegance, and spirit.

To many a critic such a writer will appear superficial. They do not feel the superiority of talent that is requisite to convey luminous truths, and deep flexions, with almost apparent carelessness. Because Wisdom generally wears a frown, they do not conceive that she can ever be taught to smile ; and that which constitutes a writer's greatest merit, being able to convey *interesting* matter in an *easy* manner, appears to them a pro-

his inferiority. Enchanting La Fontaine! my model and my guide, dread not such judges: it is thy greatest glory, and will insure thy everlasting fame, that thou hast been able to attract thy reader by an easy brilliancy, and engage him afterwards by solid reason and profound morality..

## LETTER XXII.

**L**A Fontaine was a singular character. His soul was as simple as his understanding was acute. On account of that simplicity, and of his being often absent in company, which gave him frequently an appearance of silliness, he was called by his contemporary wits *le bon homme*. You know this phrase is generally used by the French when they speak of a good-natured man who has scarce common sense. As Boileau, Moliere, and Racine were one day walking together in the Park at Versailles, they saw La Fontaine perched up in a tree

ere he was possibly composing a fable. Scine and Boileau began to laugh at him. "Don't laugh at him," says Moliere, "the *bon. bonne* will go farther than any of us." La Fontaine's surly-encreasing fame proves the superiority of Moliere's penetration.

The object of this inimitable fabulist is to be useful : to be useful, he knew must be agreeable : to be agreeable, knew he must have variety. He fully attained all his ends. He has so tissued wit, sense, and sentiment in his works, that he must please every species of readers. He has so many ideas, that, had him ever so often, he is always new. He has so many remarks which come home every man's bosom, that he is always

interesting. Like Horace, he is with more pleasure as well as profit, proportion as men advance in life. But a circumstance peculiar only to himself is, that the same fable which charms the philosopher, shall delight the thoughtless schoolboy and the giddy coquet.

“ Deux coqs vivoient en paix, une Pa-

“ furvint,

“ Et voilà la guerre allumée ;

“ Amour, tu perdis Troye—”

How simple, how rapid that narration! how lively, how graceful, how unexpected the apostrophe! And with what inconceivable address has he introduced into his apostrophe a moral reflection! See too how he has given dignity to the reflection.

s reflection, by bringing in the destruction of Troy. This is another of La Fontaine's secrets, to make a grand idea himself out of what is seemingly a frivolous consideration. Here we are thinking only of two cocks, and by a single stroke of his pen we are placed in a superior order of things, and have brought before us the Iliad, the Æneid, Agamemnon, Priam, Helen, and Achilles.

Do me the pleasure to read that fable ; (*Les deux Coqs.*) You are lazy ; you'll not read ; otherwise I should recommend to you, *Les Animaux malades de la peste* ; *Fille* ; *le Paysan du Danube* ; *le Chene* ; *le Roseau* ; *le Chat, la Belette & le petit lapin*. You are a good creature, but an insolent and dissipated one. Do then, indulge

indulge your indolence and me together  
and abandon yourself a single evening  
the luxury of your slippers, to read the  
child of nature, and favourite of the  
Graces.

One fable I am determined you shall  
read ; that is, provided you read me  
for here it is.

### LES DEUX PIGEONS.

DEUX Pigeons s'aimoient d'amour tendre ;  
L'un d'eux s'ennuyant au logis,  
Fut assez fou pour entreprendre  
Un voyage en lointain Pays.  
L'autre lui dit : qu'allez vous faire ?  
Voulez-vous quitter votre frere ?  
L'absence est le plus grand des maux ;  
Non pas pour vous, cruel. Au moins que les travaux  
Les dangers, les soins du voyage,  
Changent un peu votre courage.  
Encor si la saison s'avançoit davantage !

Attendu

ndez les Zéphyrs : qui vous presse ? Un Corbeau  
 à-l'heure annonçoit malheur à quelqu' oiseau,  
 Je songerai plus que rencontre funeste,  
 Faucons, que rézeaux. Hélas ! dirai-je, il pleut :  
 Mon frere a-t-il tout ce qu'il veut,  
 Bon soupé, bon gîte, & le reste ?  
 Ce discours ébranla le cœur  
 De notre imprudent voyageur :  
 le desir de voir, & l'humeur inquiète  
 porterent enfin. Il dit : ne pleurez point :  
 s jours au plus rendront mon ame satisfaite :  
 eviendrai dans peu conter de point en point

Mes aventures à mon frere.

désennuierai : quiconque ne voit guere,  
 guere à dire aussi. Mon voyage dépeint

Vous fera d'un plaisir extrême ;  
 irai : j'étois là, telle chose m'avint :

Vous y croirez être vous-même.

es mots, en pleurant, ils se dirent adieu.

voyageur s'éloigne ; & voilà qu'un nuage  
 oblige de chercher retraite en quelque lieu.

seul arbre s'offrit, tel encor que l'orage  
 traîta le Pigeon en dépit du feuillage.

devenu serein, il part tout morfondu,  
 ne du mieux qu'il peut son corps chargé de pluie ;  
 un champ à l'écart voit du bled répandu,

Voit

Voit un Pigeon auprès, cela lui donne envie:  
Il y vole, il est pris : ce bled couyroit d'un las.  
Les menteurs & traîtres appâts.

Le las étoit usé ; si bien que de son aile,  
De ses pieds, de son bec, l'oiseau le rompt enfin.  
Quelque plume y périt, & le pis du destin  
Fut qu'un certain Vautour, à la serre cruelle,  
Vit notre malheureux, qui traînant la ficelle,  
Et les morceaux du las qui l'avoit attrapé,

Sembloit un forçat échappé.

Le Vautour s'en alloit le lier, quand des nues  
Fond à son tour un Aigle aux aîles étendues.  
Le Pigeon profita du conflit des voleurs,  
S'envola, s'abattit auprès d'une masure,

Crut pour ce coup que ses malheurs  
Finiroient par cette aventure :

Mais un fripon d'enfant, cet âge est sans pitié,  
Prit sa fronde, & du coup tua plus d'à moitié  
La volatile malheureuse,

Qui maudissant sa curiosité,

Traînant l'aile, & tirant le pied,  
Demi morte, & demi boiteuse,  
Droit au logis s'en retourna :  
Que bien que mal elle arriva,  
Sans autre aventure fâcheuse.

à nos gens rejoints ; & je laisse à juger  
Combien de plaisirs ils payerent leurs peines.

ans, heureux amants, voulez-vous voyager ?  
Que ce soit aux rives prochaines.

ez-vous l'un à l'autre un monde toujours beau,  
Toujours divers, toujours nouveau :  
ez-vous lieu de tout, comptez pour rien le reste.  
quelquefois aimé : je n'aurois pas alors,

Contre le Louvre & ses trésors,  
Contre le firmament & sa voûte céleste,

Changé les bois, changé les lieux,  
Norés par les pas, éclairés par les yeux

De l'aimable & jeune Bergere,  
Pour qui, sous le fils de Cythere,  
S'ervis engagé par mes premiers serments.

las ! quand reviendront de semblables moments ?  
ut-il que tant d' objets si doux & si charmants  
laissent vivre au gré de mon ame inquiète ?  
si mon cœur osoit encor se renflammer !  
sentirai-je plus de charme qui m'arrête ?

Ai-je passé le temps d'aimer ?

Is that charming ? It is indeed inde-  
ribably so. But La Fontaine's beau-  
ties

ties need not be pointed out; like La  
(1) Hervey's, they are felt as soon  
seen.

(1) In this age of goddeffes and angels, w  
almost every woman is a Juno, a Venus, o  
tenth Muse, this Lady can pretend to li  
merit. She is neither an angel nor a god  
She is only a very pretty Woman, very sens  
very amiable, and very well-bred.

## LETTER XXII.

TO MY FRIEND AT PARIS.

YOU cannot conceive the notions of the common people of England of your countrymen. When the (a very ugly woman) came into room this morning to make my fire, asked her my two usual questions: what's o'clock? and, what sort of day is it? Sir, says she, it is past nine; a y cold morning; and, the Lord's ho- name be ever blessed and praised, is above the Devil still, the French all killed! All? says I. All, says she.

she. I could not conceive what meant!—I don't understand you.—Here's the story; I heard it this morn from a very genteel gentleman, a very pretty (1) gentleman indeed, in the grocer's shop, where I went to buy some sugar for my mistress. The Comte d'Estangus, Sir, brought the whole French fleet to the Island of Jersey, and made a landing of twenty thousand men; but the brave British boys (and she was almost crying with pleasure) fell upon them,

(1) When Salisbury tells Lady Constance that Lewis is to be married to Blanch, and France is to make peace with England; she answers;

Fellow, be gone; I cannot brook thy sight;  
This news hath made thee a most ugly man.

em, and did not leave a mother's babe  
them alive.—How many brave Bri-  
n boys were there? Sir, there was  
fifteen hundred.—Why that was a  
very small number to kill twenty thou-  
nd men. Sir, they were only French-  
men! oh, they are a dastardly set of  
gs; they are daunted in a minute,  
: but indeed it's no wonder, for you  
ow they never eats but sallad and  
gs. But they must be fools too as  
ll as cowards; for what brought them  
ere? Didn't they know they'd be  
it? Yes, they know'd it well enough;  
they no sooner got their legs on the  
ound, than off they run'd like a flock  
geese.—But you seem to be very  
olent against the French: did they  
ever

ever do you any harm? No, Sir, they never did me any harm in particular but I can't bear the name of them; hate them worse than toads; and every true-born English-woman and English-man too ought to hate them as much as I do. Don't they come over here to dress hair, and cook, and skip and dance, and dance away with our money, and suck the very blood out of this poor country? It is a shame for the nobility to encourage them as they do; so if I wish the mob had killed them when they burnt the chapels for a papish crew as they are: yes, Sir, they are all papishes, and locuses, and cat-pillars, and varmin.—Lord knows where

you will find a honest old strangle

eloquence would have ended, if I  
had not told her I wanted to get up.

This is the only country in the world  
where every human being is a politician.  
The lower classes of people here do not  
like politics by way of amusement,  
as in other countries; they take a real  
hearted interest in every thing that is  
going forward. It is equal to them  
whether the subject is foreign or do-  
estic; whether it is possible for them  
to know any thing of it or not; they  
catch a corner of it, their heads heat,  
they support their opinions by the most  
curious oratory, and when words fail  
them, they very frequently come to  
blows.

As I was passing through a court that leads into the Strand, a few days after the election for the City of Westminster was over, I heard a woman cry, Murder! A crowd had got into the entry; and I asked a man that was there, what was the matter? It is a carpenter, says he, that is beating his wife, and who has been beating her these three days. That said I, is very cruel: why is he suffered to beat her? O, Sir, she deserves it, for she never lets the poor man have a moment's peace; she has been tormenting him this great while about his vote, and this is the cause of the quarrel: he voted for Lord Lincoln; and she wanted

the him to vote for *Charles* (1) *Fox*. Well, but said I, she ought to be quiet now, the election is over, and Mr. Fox has succeeded. That, Sir, is the reason her husband has been beating her ever since. He is continually *crowing* over him, and telling him that he is a dirty dog, that he wanted to enslave his country; but that, thanks be to God, the City of Westminster will be free in spite of him.

I was thinking after, where this woman had got the idea of preserving the  
 (1) When a man here, by great talents or  
 any other extraordinary merit, becomes a favourite, he frequently loses the title of Mister. Charles Fox and Horace Walpole are much more talked of, and better known, than Mr. Walpole or Mr. Fox.

liberty of the City of Westminster; and I recollect that it must have been from the song of the day, which I had heard at the hustings, and which I had bought. It was, as you may suppose, outrageously violent against the ministry, and every verse ended with this chorus, to the tune of Langolee :

“ Now is the time, my brave fellow,  
“ an ever,  
“ We'll honour for Fox and Rodney for  
“ ever,  
“ And join heart and hand in a noble  
“ endeavour,  
“ For setting the City of Westminster free.”

The poetry you see is brilliant, the hymns rich, the sentiments great, and the music popular. The whole, I dare say, contributed not a little towards enlivening the brain of this patriotic female.

P. S. It is worth your while to come to England, were it only to see an election and a cock-match. There is a celestial spirit of anarchy and enthusiasm in these scenes, that words cannot paint, and which no countryman of yours can ever form an idea.

## LETTER XXIV.

I Made two observations in my travels ; one, that the people of every country make something well ; the other, that every nation has a peculiar manner of ruining itself. The English ruin themselves by play ; the French by women ; the Irish, by hospitality ; the Swiss, by drinking ; and the Germans, by a multitude of servants. I should not have said *every*, I should have said *almost* every. The Italians don't ruin themselves, because they are ruined already. However, individuals among them *do* ; some Milanese, for example,

ample, by eating ; some Venetians, by  
illantry and gaming ; some Neapolitans, by equipages and embroidery ;  
and several Romans, by every species of  
purity. Neither do the Dutch ruin  
themselves ; it is not, however, because  
they are already ruined ; but because  
they are too phlegmatic to ruin them-  
selves any way. The few who *do* de-  
stroy themselves, do it by avarice, by  
lending money at exorbitant interest on  
good securities.

There are Dutchmen too who ruin  
themselves by flowers. I do not guaranty  
the truth of this anecdote, though I  
heard it from persons of veracity in Hol-  
land. A man, whose passion was for  
flowers, and who had an uncommon fine

tulip-

tulip-root of a very particular kind, I heard that another florist had one fine as his. He purchased it from him for a sum of money so large, I dare not mention it; and when he had got it into his possession, he broke it to pieces with his heel, saying, “Now there is not in the world another tulip-root equal to mine.”

Every nation excels too in making something. The French make gold and silver stuffs and political lyes better than any people in the world. The Italians make ices, maccaroni, and religious ly to admiration. The Saxons make excellent porcelaine. The Dutch are famous for making sea-landscapes. The Flemish, for making lace. And the

Engli

kind English—why the English, I think, make men and women better than any nation I know. There is a better race of men and women in England than I have ever seen in any other country. If any one asks me *why* it is so; I answer, I can't. If he asks me how I *know* that it is so; I answer, by looking at them. There is also a better race of dogs (1) and horses here than in any other country I have seen; but there are too a great many *garrons* and *curs*.

2. S. Well, reader, you are an unsatisfactory creature. With what easy good-

ness) Not to speak of a great many very promising puppies.

nature

nature did you walk into the trap I  
for you ! How were you delighted  
hearing me call marine views, *sea-la-  
scapes* ! The blundering Irishman !  
be sworn, you smiled ; and that be-  
you thought yourself cleverer than I.  
Now that you are not quite so *sure*  
your superiority, perhaps you will  
grave.

## LETTER XXV.

RAY, Sir, said I to a Frenchman in the playhouse, is that the third that is ended? "Yes, Sir," says he, that is the third act that is ended; it is the fourth which is going to begin." This answer struck me; this man, said I myself, has answered my question once: yes, Sir; once—it is the third that is ended; twice—it is the fourth which is going to begin, was a third answer. We entered into conversation, and found him a very sensible man.

At supper, that night, I told a lady an answer I had received, and that it had surprised

surprised me. Why ? said she. Had I asked *me* the question, Madam, I should have thought him answered with, Sir. He was a politer man than I am, says she. You are a Spartan; I was an Athenian. I felt foolish. I see, Madam, how he was politer than I should be : my answer gave all the information necessary to be given; to say thrice was superfluous.—True, Sir; your *Oui, Monsieur*, would have been right (*dur*). It is only as much as you are obliged to say. It is cutting a man short and telling him you don't desire any farther conversation with him. Whereas, seeming to interest yourself in the question he asks you, and taking some pains to give him the fullest answer you can,

had a desire to oblige him, to continue conversation with him, and encourage him (particularly if he be a stranger) to speak to you again. I found that she was perfectly in the right; for his answer had exactly the effect on me that she described. This is *a nothing*: I mentioned it as such; but it is very essential to be known by every traveller who wishes to render himself agreeable to foreigners. It is also a characteristic trait of the French nation.

## LETTER XXVI.

**I**T is inconceivable how differently I talk about women in this world. Some say with Jaffier :

Can there in woman be such glorious faith?  
Sure all ill stories of thy sex are false.

Oh woman ! lovely woman ! Nature made thee

To temper man : we had been brutes without you.

Angels are painted fair, to look like you :  
There's in you all that we believe of Heaven.  
Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,  
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

and some with (1) Castalio; *gauoy blv*

Woman the fountain of all human frailty !  
 What mighty ills have not been done by woman ?  
 Who was't betray'd the Capitol ? A woman.  
 Who lost Mark Antony the world ? A woman :  
 Who was the cause of a long ten years war,  
 And laid at last old Troy in ashes ? Woman :  
 Destructive, damnable, deceitful woman.  
 Woman to man first as a blessing given,  
 When innocence and love were in their primes,  
 Happy a while in Paradise they lay,  
 But quickly woman long'd to go astray ;  
 Some foolish new adventure needs must prove,  
 And the first devil she saw, she chang'd her  
 love ; *long lit e*  
 To his temptations lewdly she inclin'd  
 Her soul, and for an apple damn'd mankind.

I remember twenty years ago I used  
 converse often on this subject, with a  
 cousin of mine, an officer, who was a very

(1) Reader, are you a Jassier or a Castalio ?

Vol. I.

N

wild

wild young man. So opposite were our opinions on this head, that we never met, but we quarrelled. He swore “ women were as wily as serpents;” said, “ that they were harmless as doves. I was perpetually comparing them to lambs; he was continually comparing them to wild-cats.

He went abroad; and as he was a very amiable man, he made himself friends wherever he went. I have not seen him these fifteen years till yesterday. We dined together *tête-à-tête*, and talked over the days of our youth and our travels. We talked of men and manners, women and things; and, in short, of a great variety of subjects. Well, says he to me, have you the same ideas of the sublime

virtues

virtues and celestial softness of the fair sex you had when I knew you? Yes, said I, I have never kept company but with good women; and I think more highly of them every day: you thought ill of them before you went abroad, and dare say, you think much worse of them now that you are returned. Says e, you are mistaken; when I knew ou, I had seen but few women; and those merited the character I gave them. since we parted I have seen a great many, both in England and on the continent; and this is the result of my knowledge and obfervation. Women resemble a ladder; and this ladder re-bbles Virgil's (1) oak; its top points

<sup>1)</sup> " — Quantum vertice ad auras  
Aethereas, tantum radice in tartara tendit."

to Heaven, it's foot to Tartarus : I have mounted every rung of it ; I have studied women from the court to the cottage, and have, in consequence, divided the sex into ten classes. The first class are angels ; the last class are devils. Neither of these classes is large. The second is charming : the ninth is wicked. These two classes are very considerable. The latter of them may justly be compared to apes, foxes, hyenas, wild-cats ; the former to every thing that is amiable in the creation. Of the remaining fix there are two that are supremely ridiculous and four as insipid as unseasoned melons.

I told him, Ma'am, I should write you our dialogue, and asked him in what class I should place you. I am afraid

to tell you his answer. Had he ranked you in the first class, I should have told you with pleasure; but I dare not tell you he placed you only in the second.

## LETTER XXVII.

WOMAN is a very nice and a very complicated machine. Her springs are infinitely delicate ; and differ from those of man pretty nearly as the work of a repetition-watch does from that of a town-clock. Look at her body ; how delicately formed ! Examine her senses ; how exquisite and nice ! Observe her understanding ; how subtle and acute ! But look into her heart ; there is the watch work, composed of parts so minute in themselves, and so wonderfully combined, that they must be seen by a microscopic eye to be clearly comprehended.

The perception of a woman is as quick as lightning. Her penetration is intuition; I had almost said instinct. By glance of her eye she shall draw a deep and just conclusion. Ask her how she formed it; she cannot answer the question. The philosopher deduces inferences; and his inferences shall be right: but he gets to the head of the stair-case, if I may say, by slow degrees, and mounting step by step. She arrives at the top (1) of the stair-case as well as he; but whether she leaped or flew there, is more than she knows herself. While she trusts her instinct she is scarce ever deceived; she

(1) I must be understood to mean here within a certain circle of ideas.

is generally lost when she attempts reason.

As the perception of women is surpris-  
ingly quick; so their souls and ima-  
ginations are uncommonly susceptible.  
Few of them have (1) talents enough

(1) I should rather say *culture* than *talent*.  
I have known women very uncommonly endow-  
ed by nature, and more of them of the  
country than of any other. Lady Hamilton  
for example, has a very superior talent for music.  
Her execution on the harpsichord is perfect  
and she composes *extempore* better than any  
man in Europe. Lady Althorp too has a very  
uncommon talent for drawing. I have not seen  
compositions of any *amateur's* equal to her's  
taste and invention. If those two ladies had  
applied themselves to writing, I will venture to say  
they would have been charming authors. How  
delightful a writer is Lady Mary Wortley Montagu!

ite; but when they do, how lively  
are their pictures! how animated their  
descriptions! But if few women write,  
they all talk; and every man may  
judge of them in this point, from every  
circle he goes into. Spirit in conversa-  
tion depends entirely upon fancy; and  
women all over the world talk better  
than men. Let a (1) man and a woman  
of apparently equal understandings go  
together to an opera or to a masquerade:  
see which of them will enjoy the most

(1) Let it rather be a boy and a girl of the  
same age, who go to an opera or a play for the  
first time. The novelty is equally striking and  
interesting for both. See which will comprehend  
the quickest, which will receive the liveliest  
impressions, and retain longest the impressions  
they receive.

pleasure,

pleasure, and bring home the greatest number of interesting anecdotes. Have they a character to pourtray, or a figure to describe ? They give but three traits of either one or the other, and the character is known, or the figure placed before our eyes. Why ? From the susceptibility of their imaginations : the fancies receive lively impressions from those principal traits, and they paint those impressions with the same vivacity with which they received them. I remember seeing an English lady at Geneva who had just come out of Italy. She painted the passage of the Alps in six phrases better than I could have done by a fortnight's labour upon paper.

look upon it that the elements are only differently mixed in women than what they are in men, but that they are almost of different sorts. Their fire is purer; their clay is more refined. The difference, I think, may be about the element that there is between air and æther, between culinary and electrical fire. The material spirit is not given perhaps in so great a portion to women as to men; but it is a more subtle, and it is a finer spirit. I have seen a woman of fancy warm in conversation, she shall produce a hundred glowing images, among which there will not be one indelicate or coarse. I am a man on the same subject; he will possibly find stronger allusions, but they

they shall neither be so brilliant nor  
chaste.

As to gracefulness of expression, it  
belongs almost exclusively to women.

But men, you say, have sounder judg-  
ments. That they unquestionably ha-  
ve and for that, I confess, I never could  
but one reason, the difference of  
education. To the age of thirteen  
fourteen girls are every where supe-  
rior to boys. At fourteen a boy begins  
to get some advantages over a girl, and  
continues to improve, by means of ed-  
ucation, till three or four and twenty,  
possibly till thirty. Her education,  
as it is, is over at eighteen. He has  
the fountains of knowledge opened  
to him; interest to stimulate him to

his parts ; rivals to emulate ; oppos-  
es to conquer. His talents are al-  
ways on the stretch. To this he adds  
advantage of travel ; and if he even  
should not go abroad, he can enter into  
an infinite number of houses in London,  
when she can be permitted to go into  
a few. A sound judgement cannot be  
acquired but by continual exercise, and  
frequent comparisons. It is impossible  
for women to have these advantages ;  
and thence, I believe, the principal cause  
of the inferiority of their judgements.  
The liveliness of their fancies and of  
their feelings, you will say, contributes  
also to weaken their powers of judging.  
That probably does enter for something ;  
but education must be the grand cause ;  
for

for how many men are there among your acquaintance, who join solid judgments to fine feelings and warm imaginations?

Take a man and a woman who have never been out of the village in which they were born, and neither of whom knows how to read; I question very much if his discrete faculties will be found to be stronger than her's.

As judgement then can come but from knowledge, I will readily agree, that the number of women who have solid judgments is very small. But if I do not contend for them on this point as equal to men, I believe you will not dispute the superior sensibility of their souls. Their feelings are certainly more exquisi-

than those of men ; and their sentiments greater and more refined. Though severity, ill-temper, neglect and perfidy of men often force women to have recourse to (1) dissimulation ; yet when they have noble characters to deal with, how sincere and ardent is their love ! how delicate and solid their attachment ! man is not near so selfish a creature as

1. When a man is in love, the object of his passion is, if I may so say, himself. When a woman is enamoured

(1) Even among those unhappy females who sustain their miserable existence by cunning and falsehoods, there is scarcely one who has not been taught perfidy by cruel experience, and who has not been deceived, before she ever thought of living ; for in love, as at play, most sharpers find dupes in the beginning.

of

of a man, she forgets herself, the world and all that it contains, and wishes to exist only for the object of her affection. How few men make any violent sacrifices to sentiment ! But how many men does every man know, who have sacrificed fortune and honours to nobler, pure, and disinterested motives !

A man mounts a breach; braves danger, and obtains a victory. This is glorious and great. He has served his country, he has acquired fame, preferment, riches. Wherever he appears, respect awaits him, admiration attends him, crowds press to meet him, and theatres receive him with bursts of applause. His glory dies not with him. History preserves his memory from ob-

That thought cheers his dying  
 ; and his last words pronounced  
 feeble pleasure are, (1) *I shall not  
 die.* A woman sends her husband to the  
 ; she lived but *in* that husband. Her  
 goes with him. She trembles for  
 dangers of the sea ; she trembles for  
 dangers of the land. Every billow  
 that swells she thinks is to be his tomb ;  
 every ball that flies, she imagines is di-  
 rected against *him*. A brilliant capital  
 appears to her a dreary desert : her uni-  
 verse was a man ; and that man's life,  
 terrors tell her, is in danger. Her  
 days are days of sorrow ; her nights are  
 pless nights. She fits immoveable,

(1) *Non omnis moriar.*

her mornings, in all the dignity  
composure of grief, like Agrippina  
her chair ; and when at night she  
repose, repose has fled her couch :  
silent tears steal down her cheek,  
wet her pillow ; or if by chance  
hausted nature finds an hour's slumb'—  
her fancy, sickened by her distemper'd  
soul, sees in that sleep a bleeding lo—  
or his mangled corse. Time passes,  
her grief increases ; till, worn out  
length by too much tenderness, she is  
the victim of too exquisite a sensibility  
and sinks with sorrow to her grave.

No, cold unfeeling reader, these  
not pictures of *my* creation. They  
neither charged nor embellished ; but  
both copied faithfully from nature.

The Count (1) D'Estaing and Lady Cornwallis.

(1) He is now a Grandee of Spain, covered with ribbands, and aiming to arrive at the head of the state. His sentiments were very noble; but they had for object only himself. This unfortunate lady thought not of herself; she died for another.

The circumstances I alluded to about this master I was an eye-witness of. I saw him last April surrounded in the public gardens at Paris by crowds of admirers; and one night that he came to the opera, the whole theatre received him with repeated acclamations.

## LETTER XXVIII.

*L'OR se partage mais non pas la louange*

And hence the reason why author and beauties detest each other so sincerely. You, Madam, are an exception and so undoubtedly, Sir, are you. You know too, each of you, one or two more exceptions; but I am sure you will admit the truth of my assertion for all the other Sister-beauties and Brother-wits of your acquaintance.

The instant a very beautiful girl begins to attract the admiration of the world, Lord, says an inferior beauty, wonder what the men can see in Miss —

I am

I am sure there are a hundred women in London handsomer than she is; meaning by these hundred women one single woman only, that is, herself. The certain proof of this is, that there is not one of these hundred beauties, whose merits this lady will not deny, as soon as ever she hears her particularly praised.

An author's fate is nearly the same. As soon as he begins to be well spoken of, there issues forth an intrepid band of Myrmidons, all ready to knock him down, for no other reason but because he has got up. Every author is a monopolist. He would have all the praise in the world for himself. He does not see that there is room for Horace and Vir-

gil on the same shelf. He cannot comprehend that Shakspeare may be talked of for a quarter of an hour, and Richardson for a quarter of an hour after. No. Were he to fill a library for a friend, he would put no man's work in it but his own ; and if he could effect it, he would never let people talk of any other subject. I remember *à propos* of this a trait of Voltaire. He was jealous of a man that was hanged, because he thought he was too much talked of. A remarkably daring criminal was executed in Paris. Voltaire supped that night in a large company, where the conversation turned principally upon this man's crime, and his behaviour at the place of execution. The Wit bore it as

long

ng as he could ; but at last, unable to  
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contain himself, he cried out, " No con-  
versation but about this infamous mis-  
creant, and *Meropewas* acted to-night ! "

The love of praise is very laudable.  
generous ambition ought to be the  
first passion of every noble mind. But,  
dear Sirs, and dear Madams, do not  
think you are adding to your laurels by  
clipping those of other people. Permit  
me to assure you, you are doing the con-  
trary ; you are clipping your own. Wit  
and beauty, however enchanting they  
may be, are of infinitely less value than  
a benevolent heart. The world is en-  
lightened ; you cannot deceive it ; it  
sees your motive. And when you launch  
a sarcasm, or point an epigram, you may

possibly give your rival a slight wound but, be persuaded, you give a mortal one to yourself.

Beauties, I have observed, are often jealous of Beauties that they see; but authors are jealous of authors whom they never have seen. Some indeed carry it still farther; they envy the dead. Voltaire was one of these. He envied every man that had acquired fame in any part of the world, from Homer down to Jean Baptiste Rousseau. In this country, thank heaven, there is no envy; and if, by chance, a writer is criticised, it is only done through good-nature, for the sake of enlightening him. One consolation he is sure of, that whenever he is ill-spoken of, it will be, at least, in a delicate

icate language. The matter may be  
here, but it will be softened by the  
egence of the manner. I had a fine  
nquet, for *my* vanity one day in a  
ookseller's shop, where I was unknown,  
d where I went to purchase Mr. Hay-  
y's *Essay on History*. The bookseller  
ad it not; and while his boy was  
ringing it from another shop, I asked  
im some questions about new publica-  
ons. No, Sir, says a genteel-looking  
an that was there, there is no taste in  
his country; they buy all manner of  
ash; and, what is worse, they praise it  
fter. I wrote formerly; but seeing the  
ge had no discernment, I left it off;  
nd now, Sir, there is scarce any thing  
ut wretched scribblers in the whole  
kingdom.

kingdom. There certainly, Sir, said  
are great numbers of bad writers  
every country ; but, I believe, there  
some authors here at present who  
as strong sense, as much ingenuity,  
as highly polished taste as are to  
found in any nation of Europe.—W  
are they, Sir ? I am sure I should  
very glad to know them.—Dr. John  
Sir, must be allowed to be a new  
and profound moralist ; Mr. Burke,  
must grant, is a fine writer ; Mr. S  
ridan—He begged to be excuse  
he saw very little merit in any of them  
and if they had *some*, it was buried  
der such heaps of blemishes, as entit  
them, on the whole, rather to cens  
than to praise. He then particulari

umber of their defects, seasoning his  
cisms, every now and then, with most  
five epithets. As I am not fond either  
abuse or falsehoods, I shall not copy  
of his remarks on these gentlemen.  
mentioned to him afterwards two or  
the others in different lines of literature.  
e was a mountebank ; another had  
common sense ; a third was wretched-  
execrable. Now here, thought I,  
fine occasion for me to fish out a  
pliment for myself. This man does  
know me ; and as he is so outrage-  
y violent against all the world, a  
e praise from him will be doubly  
useful. Pray, Sir, (addressing him  
in an insinuating tone of voice, and  
ing all complacency within) have  
you

you read *Sherlock's Letters*? Yes, I have read him; and a very laborious thick-headed fellow he is—I looked Parsons in the Critic, when Sneering him his portrait. I strove to laugh, repeat his words—Ha! ha! ha! Sir, he is a very laborious—I wanted say the other word; but *thick-headed* stuck in my throat; I could not get out (1). You may judge I did not much longer; I had got enough of conversation; so I took up my coat and walked off, muttering to myself like Sofia, “an enemy to the muses” “to music.”

(1) I plead guilty to *labour*. *Thick-headedness* I deny.

## LETTER XXIX.

WHILE Admiral Rodney was beating the Spaniards last winter, I was engaged in fighting with the French. I was teaching Europe to respect the British flag; and I was teaching her to deride the name of Shakspeare. One advantage I had over this gallant Officer: he only conquered on the ocean; but I carried the war into the very heart of the enemy's country, and fought Voluntarily before the gates of the Louvre. The advantage this gallant Officer had over me; he gained several hundred pounds

pounds a year by his campaign; and lost some hundreds by mine. The common success of my books has ruined me. However, I do not repine; for not only acquired great literary fame, but I endeavoured to serve my country even in the war; I did all that I could to eat up her enemies, by dining and supping with them almost every day of my life.

P. S. Congreve said there was something very like wit in Cibber's Plays. I declare, upon reading over these Letters, I thought once or twice, I saw something *very like* vanity in them. An Reader, after all, who knows but the Reviewers were in the right? May I

; and a vain man. Well, if I am, it is  
The a crime. There is no great harm in  
3 ruin little innocent vanity. If it was a sin,  
; for what would become of all the women in  
far the world? And what would become  
coun my friends the French?

LET-

## LETTER XXX.

**I** Don't think the worse of a man having a *small portion* of vanity. *Æneas*, perhaps, is not less interesting for having a little dash of the coxcomb in him. *I am the pious Æneas* has been objected to a thousand times; and yet it was the *judicious* Virgil who made him say it.

When a man is in a strange country where nobody knows his merits, and where he wants to have them known what would you have him do? You would have him wait till people have time to weigh him, and if he has re-

it will then appear. That, I grant you, is the better way ; but then it is tiresome to wait, and it costs others much trouble to find out these performances : whereas telling the world at once what you are, saves *it* trouble and *yourself* time. So thought Æneas ; and I think I.

Readers are divided into two classes ; people who have talents, and people who have none. Those who have no talents cannot discover your merits ; those who have, if they do not talk against you, possess at least the secret of holding their tongues. Now an author cannot have fame unless he is praised : the ignorant *can't* praise him, and the know-

ing ~~won't~~. I see no resource left him but to praise himself.

Considering that this is my real way of thinking, I should imagine my readers ought to be surprised at my modesty in paying myself so few compliments. However, as I have observed, there is no kind of writing less successful than a panegyric; nor any species of panegyric less relished than that which an author bestows upon himself; I here renounce vanity and all its works, and promise faithfully never to praise myself again as long as I live. And that you may not be in doubt about my motives for this sacrifice, I confess to you that it is solely to pay my court to my readers, and particularly to my *dear* brother-authors.

All the world has condemned Virgil for  
 at (1) *I am the pious Æneas.* I will ven-  
 ture to assert, that Virgil is in the right;  
 and that all the world is in the wrong.  
 Æneas is *not* vain; he only praises his  
 heart: the man *alone* is vain who praises  
 his understanding. The reason of this  
 distinction is evident: it is in every  
 man's power to have a good heart, but  
 no man can give himself a good under-  
 standing.

Obvious conclusion: that *I* was not  
 vain when I said in my dedication to  
 Edward Bristol, *my soul was pure*; though  
 this would have been unpardonable vanity  
 to me to have hinted that *I* had a ray of  
 common sense. I hope I have now con-

(1) *Sum pius Æneas.*

vinced

vinced the reader, that, notwithstanding appearances are somewhat against Æneas and I are two very civil mo persons.



son and I will : notwithstanding any  
of Holiness you are to us I know  
indeed : and your love to us :  
which exceeding you used to us  
To you a God I and I beseech you of  
-now more than I say I .

London, 1612. (1)

H. C. M.